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In an increasing globalized society, the number of professionals, including teachers working in foreign countries has increased. Additionally, the growing diversity in U.S. schools today and the added challenge of equipping students with 21st century skills has necessitated the recruitment of international teachers in U.S. public schools. Although state agencies use the recruitment of international teachers as a way to enhance the global awareness of high school graduates and specifically their knowledge of other cultures, little is known about international teachers' transition to teaching in the U.S.

This study aims at enhancing an understanding of the experiences of international teachers in U.S. public schools in order to interrogate transitional challenges and ruminate on implications for educational leadership. Using a narrative research design eight teachers narrate their stories of transition, adjustment and negotiation. These stories inform the reader about the different identity transitional resources that international teachers utilize as they negotiate who they are as teachers in a foreign space.

A NARRATIVE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS' TRANSITIONAL
IDENTITIES IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale of Study

The growing diversity in United States classrooms (Banks & Banks, 2009; Jenlink & Townes, 2009; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 1987) in addition to educating for competence in communicating across national and ethnic difference, and the added component of equipping students with twenty-first century skills has led to a necessary emphasis on education with a global perspective (Barber, 2003; Kirkwood, 2001; Jackson, 2008; Merryfield, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002; Wilson, 1993). Additionally, education around the world has been impacted by the growing interconnections and interdependences among nations (Castells, 1997; Lingard, 2009; Popkewitz & Rizvi, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2000, 2010), leading to an increasing number of international professionals (Appleton, Morgan, & Sives, 2006; Iredale, 2001). Teachers have not been excluded from professional migration trends although, as Appleton et al. (2006) point out, international teacher recruitment has not sparked as much scholarly interest as that of professionals such as nurses, doctors and engineers.

The impact of global connections is evident in the themes highlighted in the current rhetoric on educational reforms whose major focus is global competency for all students. The reforms mandate schools to prepare students to be successful in national and global economies by equipping them with skill-sets that warrant them a competitive

edge in the job market, both nationally and worldwide (Day, 2002; Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006 ; Day & Smethem, 2009; Hargreaves, 2000). The literature further suggests four trends towards meeting the need for education that includes a global competency focus—integrating international content in subject areas (Committee for Economic Development, 2006; Devlin-Foltz, 2010; Jackson, 2008), internationalizing schools of education by offering international experiences to students of teacher education programs (Buczynski, Lattimer, Inoue, & Alexandrowicz, 2010; Cushner, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Roberts, 2007; Wilson, 1993), internationalizing educational administration programs (Paige & Mestenhauser, 1999; Walker & Dimmock, 2000), and lastly, recruiting international teachers in public schools (Appleton et al., 2006; American Federation of Teachers, 2009; Barber, 2003). According to the Barber (2003) report on international teacher recruitment, U.S. public schools utilized at least 10,000 foreign born and trained teachers who were on temporary cultural exchange J-1 visas at the time the report was compiled. His report also revealed that at least 22 state education agencies were designated as exchange visitor program sponsors for international teachers including states such as Alabama, California and North Carolina. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (2009) report indicated that the number of international teachers had risen to an estimated 17,000 by 2007. Both the Barber report and the AFT report noted that little is known concerning the practice of recruiting international teachers to teach in U.S public schools.

The AFT (2009) reports points out that there are 33 international recruiting firms working in the U.S. some of which include the Visiting International Faculty (VIF) and

the Teachers Placement Group (TPG). The international recruiting agencies have different recruitment policies. For instance, the VIF offers interested school districts a password that enables them to access the site and “view online resumes, credentials and video interviews of recruited and screened teachers before deciding which teachers to hire” (AFT, 2009, p. 15). The school districts pay a fee to VIF for the service. However the employer of the teachers varies. Sometimes the teachers are employed by the school district while at other times they are an employee of VIF.

The above “internationalizing” education trends in the U.S. have been necessitated by the need to have high school graduates who are globally competent and equipped with: (a) knowledge of world regions, cultures, economies, and global issues; (b) skills to communicate in languages other than English, and the ability to access information from a variety of sources around the world, to work in cross-cultural teams while recognizing and addressing stereotyped mindsets; (c) respect for other cultures and the disposition to engage responsibly as actors in the global context and in their own communities (Center for International Understanding, 2005; Devlin-Foltz, 2010; Stewart, 2007).

Though none of these four trends has received wide attention in research and policy, on searching the literature, the fourth trend—the presence of international teachers, has received even less attention with the exception of studies done by Flores (2003) on the socialization of Filipino teachers in Hawaii, and on pedagogical incongruence of science international teachers by Hutchison (2001).

In order to be effective in teaching in a country other than that of their origin, international teachers need to overcome certain challenges as they transition from teaching in one educational system to another. According to the Webster's dictionary, *transition* means a movement from one state, stage, or place to another. It requires stepping into an unfamiliar environment and often entails learning new norms and social skills. Nicholson (1984) offers some insights on how individuals who move from one work context to another handle transitions. Transitioning to a different work context often requires some kind of change in how a person views his or her work and a level of identity transformation (Kohonen, 2004). In this case professional transitions often entail identity negotiation.

In Nicholson's (1984) view, transition adjustments fall under four categories—*replication*, *absorption*, *determination* and *exploration*. Professionals who undergo a replication transition face minimum adjustment. They can perform in relatively the same way as their former work context and maintain similar sociocultural norms in the work place. Subsequently, the person makes few adjustments to his or her identity and there is little pressure to change. However, when a professional undergoes an absorption transition, the person makes identity adjustments with very little modification to their role. The person is devoted to learning “new skills, social behaviors, and frames of reference to meet the requirements of the new situation” (Nicholson, 1984, p. 176). The assigned role is fixed while the person's identity has to shift to fit into the new role. The individual does not have much flexibility in adjusting the role or job description but has

to shift his/her thinking in terms of the perceptions one holds about a professional identity in order to adequately perform in the new context.

Determination transition individuals alter the new role to their identity and “actively determine[s] elements in the content or structure of the role” and leave a “stamp of their identity and unique skills upon the role and its surrounding milieu” (Nicholson, 1984, p. 176). In Nicholson’s view, determination transition would mainly be experienced by professionals in senior management who are hired because of their unique expertise. Exploration transition individuals engage in the simultaneous change of their identity and their role. They have the freedom to be innovative in their job description and experiment on processes that benefit the organization as a whole and also negotiate their own identity to fit the organizational needs and their own expertise. Although Nicholson (1984) discusses these four categories in reference to administrative and managerial jobs, and not necessarily in relation to international assignments, they are useful in offering a glimpse into how professionals in different fields can handle transitions in different work contexts. In teaching contexts, the literature is scant on transition, and specifically on how the identity of the teacher is impacted. Transition that entails changing a working context, in this case to a different country, “involves a conversation between the self (identity) and new sets of circumstances that are external to the self” (Carson, 2005, p. 3). Thus a person’s identity is challenged by both external and internal factors.

Negotiating an identity in a new professional context is an important component of being socialized into a different work setting. In order to promote the success of

international teachers in U.S. schools and address issues of equity and diversity, it is important to understand the experiences of teachers who cross multiple borders including geographical and cultural borders.

Problem Statement

The literature on identity and specifically teacher identity is vast in scope, ranging from preservice teacher identity development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Britzman, 2003; Danielewicz, 2001; Olsen, 2008a, 2008b; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010; Walkington, 2005), beginning teachers' identity construction (Flores & Day, 2006; Peeler & Jane, 2003), inservice teacher identity development within the context of educational change (Day, 2008; Day et al., 2005; Day & Kington, 2008), to development of a teacher identity within specific subject matter content such as science (Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2005; Helms, 1998), mathematics (Goos & Bennison, 2008; Walshaw, 2004), and languages (Norton, 1997, 2001; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005) among other subject content areas. However, though this literature is extensive, none of this body of research specifically addresses international teachers' identities in the U.S. In other developed countries such as Australia and Canada there has been some progress in expanding on this area of research (Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001, 2004; Deters, 2008; Kostogriz & Peeler, 2007), though it is still not extensive.

As seen in Nicholson's (1984) description of the categories of transition and their relationship to work role and identity, it is crucial that the literature focuses on the connection between transition and identity. Specifically for international teachers who

have to cross geographical, cultural and teaching borders, it is important to understand how transitioning from teaching in their home countries impacts their teacher identities.

Although honing pedagogical skills is an important aspect of learning to teach, teacher beliefs impact one's teaching. Teacher beliefs create the images of how teachers view themselves. Palmer (1998) views identity as an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute one's life converge in the construction and reconstruction of who a teacher is. These forces include a person's histories, biographies and backgrounds. Teachers can either successfully interrogate these forces to shape an effective teacher identity, or they can fail, and thus negatively impact their teaching. Teacher identity is therefore central to effective teacher practice because, to a large extent, "who we think we are influences what we do" (Watson, 2006, p. 510). Identity can therefore be an asset and/or a problem. How we think as professionals and as individuals is influenced by the sociocultural contexts that we have been socialized in. Hence international teachers' identities as professionals are influenced by their diverse, backgrounds that are different from the U.S. In this study, my aim was to explore identity as an asset for international teachers. Where there is potential for identity to be a problem, I intended to seek practical resources that international teachers can access to effectively navigate their identity as an asset they can draw from when teaching across cultural and geographical borders.

There is an intricate connection between identity and how relationships between teachers and students are managed. Jenlink and Townes (2009) assert and I concur, that "educators who understand the formation of students' identities, are educators who understand the formation of their own identities" (p. xii). By identity I mean the teacher's

sense of self in the classroom and the larger context as well as their knowledge, dispositions, values, beliefs, interests and their orientation towards teaching and educational change (Drake, Spillane, & Hufferd-Ackles, 2001; Spillane, 2000). This encompasses personal and professional aspects interacting in specific contexts (Day, 2008; Day & Kington, 2008; Day et al., 2006; Sammons et al., 2007). This study hence focuses on international teachers' transitional identities in terms of personal, professional and situated aspects.

Though the current literature on teacher identity is vast it does not adequately focus on the transitional identities of international teachers and specifically those in the U.S. This research extends the literature on teacher identity to encompass transitions of international teachers.

Research Questions

The research questions emerged from my observation of the gap in the literature that depicts the relationship between teaching in international contexts and identity. Upon further reading, I learned that teacher identity is conceptualized in various ways. I wanted to understand how the identity of international teachers is impacted both as professionals and as individuals when they take up teaching assignments in the U.S. Researchers such as Goodson (1992), Goodson and Hargreaves (1996), and Acker (1999) note that the personal lives of teachers are closely linked with their professional roles and are related to the larger sociocultural contexts. Bearing this in mind, I found the work of James Spillane and his colleagues, along with Christopher Day and his colleagues useful in drawing the boundaries around I wanted to analyze, specifically how international

teachers transition from teaching in their home country to teaching in the U.S. This led me to conceptualizing identity within three dimensions—personal, professional, and situated (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Day & Kington, 2008; Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006; Sammons, Day, Kington, Gu, Stobart & Smees, 2007). In this regard, Day and Kington (2008) define the three dimensions in the following terms:

- The professional dimension reflects the social and political expectations of what a good teacher is and the educational ideals of the teacher. It is open to the influence of long term policy and social trends as to what constitutes a good teacher or classroom practitioner. It could have a number of competing elements such as local or national policy, continued professional development and work load roles.
- The situated dimension is located in a specific context and is affected by local conditions such as school pupil behavior, leadership, support and feedback.
- The personal dimension is located in life outside school and is linked to family and social roles. This dimension could involve various competing elements such as being a father, son or partner. Family and friends can become sources of support or tension. (Day & Kington, 2008, p. 11)

I incorporated Drake et al.'s (2001) and Spillane's (2000) definition of teacher identity that includes teachers' knowledge, dispositions, values, beliefs, interests and teachers orientation towards educational change. In addition to the above perspectives and views of identity, I integrated the view of narrative as an expression of the lives of teachers in this case the transitional process of international teachers. Teachers reconstruct their lives as teachers through the expression of storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2006). Narrative is an expression of experience and a means of understanding the world we live in.

The first question sought to fill the gap in the literature on the relationship between identity and transition. The second question extended the literature on identities

of teachers in relation to the personal, professional and situated dimensions through data from international teachers. As a result the two questions that emerged were:

- How do international teachers negotiate their identities as they transition from teaching in their countries of origin to teaching in U.S. high schools?
- What experiences impact personal, professional and situated dimensions of international teachers' identities within the context of teaching in the U.S.?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the transitional identities of international teachers. My goal was to provide a clearer picture related to the connections between teacher identity and transition in international settings. In this regard, my intention was to inquire into how international teachers are socialized into teaching in U.S. public schools after they have been trained to teach in a different educational system. In order to appreciate a global perspective on teaching for diversity across borders, it is important to be aware of the experiences of international teachers and the challenges they face. Additionally, school leaders as curricular and instructional leaders have the responsibility of facilitating the transition and ensuring that the socialization process is minimally problematic as international teachers face a different set of students, school structure and culture. In seeking to comprehend the relationship between identity and transition in teaching contexts, I hoped to expand on the literature on personal, professional and situated aspects of identity in relation to international teachers.

Perspectives of the Researcher

I joined graduate school at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro after having taught in my home country Kenya for eight years. My teaching experiences included teaching English, literature and Kiswahili in middle and high school. Upon reflecting on what it meant to be a teacher in a rural high school in the outskirts of Nairobi, and an international school at the heart of Nairobi city, based on my experiences, I began to ask questions about different strategies for teaching students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Upon coming to the U.S. for my graduate studies, I realized that although issues of diversity in U.S. schools are contextually different from my Kenyan experience, the frameworks used to understand the challenges and the profits of educating for diversity can be used to inform other contexts. I then began to ask questions about educating for diversity beyond the borders of a country. In this regard, I was interested in matters of educating for diversity in an international context. After visiting several schools in the U.S. during my principalship internship I was inspired to consider the experiences of teachers in U.S. schools who came from different countries. My interest in expanding on the literature about educating for diversity to educating for global contexts within a teacher identity framework then began to take shape.

As I read the literature on the internationalizing trends of education in the U.S., I realized that the voices of international teachers were missing. I also held the assumptions that teachers largely bring a sense of who they are into the classroom (Palmer, 1998). I therefore began to ask questions about the identities of international teachers and how

they negotiated working in a different educational system. Does their sense of self shift in a different context? Such questions kindled my interest in this area.

Definition of Significant Terminology

International Teachers

I use the term *international teachers* to refer to teachers who come from various countries to the U.S. for the purpose of teaching in the public schools. Most of the literature on teachers of different ethnicities and nationalities categorizes the teachers by their country of origin such as Japanese teachers, Chinese teachers, and Australian teachers. I step away from this labeling since I do not seek to showcase teachers from any particular country. My aim is to depict the stories of teachers from different parts of the world whose stories define “international” in different ways and in the teachers’ own terms. I also step away from the term *immigrant teachers* as used in some of the literature because the term *immigrant* refers to individuals who choose to leave their country of origin and settle in another country. However, international teachers are those who come to the U.S. to teach for a period of time and return to their countries of origin. If they choose to stay and acquire an immigrant status, then they belong to the status of immigrant teachers. However, all the teachers in this study were considered to be *non-immigrant aliens* by the U.S. immigration department. Additionally, they have been trained as teachers in their countries of origin before they come to the U.S.

Teacher Identity

I use the term *teacher identity* to encompass the personal, professional and situated aspects of teachers’ lives. I define teacher identity as the teacher’s sense of self

both in the classroom and in the larger sociocultural context which is always in process. I posit that teachers do not stop becoming teachers or perceiving themselves as teachers once they leave their classrooms or the school premises. Teaching is a part of who they are. The teacher's sense of self includes their knowledge, dispositions, values, beliefs, interests as well as their orientation towards educational change. This definition has been informed by the work of Christopher Day and his colleagues and James Spillane and his colleagues, as earlier noted in the problem statement.

Teacher Transitional Identities

I use the term *teacher transitional identities* to refer to the change and or negotiation of teachers' sense of self while working and living in a foreign country. Although it is difficult to weigh in on the length of time that could be considered as a transitional phase into teaching and living in a different country, I made the assumption that a transitional phase may last up to about five years. Transition is a time when an individual may face uncertainties about their competence. Hence transitional identities are woven within a complex dynamic of how teachers previously defined themselves and how they continue to redefine themselves in the new context.

Significance of the Study

Investigating teacher identity from the perspective of international teachers' transitions offers certain possibilities. This research could serve to inform policy and practice on how teachers define themselves and their work across border contexts in order to offer them the necessary support they need to be effective. Second, as Wesche (2004) asserts,

in an ever more interconnected world, in which people of diverse nationalities are increasingly called upon to communicate with one another and work together on common issues, it is crucial that the citizens and the leaders of powerful countries have the intercultural awareness and understanding of the world. (p. 279)

Thus, understanding the experiences of international teachers could play a role in enhancing intercultural awareness in U.S. schools.

Third, the findings could play a role in informing policy as to what extent international teachers perceive themselves as global agents and educators of a globally-competent student body as part of their identity. Though the policies that advocate for international teacher recruitment link this practice to educating globally competent students, it remains unclear as to whether these teachers view their teaching identity from a global perspective (Barber, 2003).

Fourth, researchers investigating international teaching experiences need to understand the practice first in terms of teacher identities. As Wenger (1998) points out, “issues of education should be addressed first and foremost in terms of identities and modes of belonging, and only secondary in terms of skills and information” (p. 263). Therefore, the significance of the study lies in part in the recognition that the work of teachers shapes and is shaped by their way of being—their identity. Finally, the stories offer the potential for connecting individual aspects of teaching to larger social contexts (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996), which include international settings.

Study Limitations

Although the international teachers’ transitional narratives offer a clearer understanding of how transitions impact professional practice the study cannot be used to

generalize how all international teachers construct or negotiate their identity while teaching in a country other than that of their origin. Nonetheless, the study depicts to what extent the identity of international teachers is impacted and offers a more global perspective to teacher identity across borders. Second, since it is impossible to have participants from all countries from which international teachers come from, the accounts of these teachers give a limited scope of transitional identity variations.

Overview of the Study

In order to understand how international teachers are socialized into teaching in U.S. public schools within the context of their teacher identities, I engaged in a narrative inquiry involving eight international teachers using open ended interviews. First I reviewed salient features of teacher identity in the literature and the factors affecting teacher identity formation among preservice and inservice teachers. I also reviewed some current literature on international teachers and the issues they face. I then collected and analyzed data from the participants depicting their stories of transition using a narrative inquiry approach.

Summary

In this first chapter, I have introduced the research study by offering some background information on the current internationalizing trends in educational reform. I have also highlighted reasons why the presence and contributions of international teachers play a significant role in public education as schools become increasingly diverse and are mandated to offer an education with a global perspective. Furthermore, I have emphasized career transition as a critical time in one's life relation to identity

negotiation. In the next chapter I discuss some theoretical approaches to identity, the literature on teacher identity and international teaching in different countries.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of the literature serves several purposes. First, the review provides some background information on various theoretical frameworks on identity in order to understand why identity matters as individuals are positioned in the larger social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts and in the teaching profession. I also discuss some literature specifically on teacher identity in order to convey an understanding as to why it is an important aspect of effective teaching practice. I then discuss relevant current literature on international teaching and some literature on international assignments that provide some findings on identity transitions within professional work contexts.

Approaches to Identity

Theories of identity from disciplines such as psychology, sociology, cultural studies and others suggest two contrasting views—essentialist and constructivist (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Gosine, 2002; Somers, 1994). The essentialist view of identity is based on a modernist idea that there is a split between the public (professional) and the private (personal) life (Alcoff, 1988; Zaretsky, 1994), combined with the notion that there is a true and original self in all human beings (Calhoun, 1994; Kondo, 1990). In this regard, the self is stable and fixed. Theorists who critique the essentialist notion of identity also believe that collective markers such as race, class and gender are not fixed

but are fluid and are therefore open to shifts and negotiation. Essentialists suppose that group members possess “natural” and “essential” characteristics, suggesting a unified, singular social experience where by individuals construct a sense of self (Cerulo, 1997). Postmodernists challenge the notion of unified group experiences. In particular poststructural feminists such as Alcoff (1988) and Weedon (1997), and cultural theorists including Hall and du Gay (1996), Hall (2005) and other postmodernists contest the notion of a unitary stable core self. In reference to cultural-ethnic identities, Hall cautions that although viewing identity through a racial or ethnic lens (or any other group identity category) is essentialist and therefore insufficient, it has its place in capturing “hidden histories” and speaking into issues of social justice and oppressive discourses. Similarly, Calhoun (1994) points out that

As lived, identity is always [a] project, not a settled accomplishment; though various external ascriptions or recognitions may be fixed and timeless. . .for example, being Jewish is always a project (or an occasion for resistance) for every Jewish individual and community, even if stereotypes about how to be Jewish are maintained or presented as fixed by anti-Semites or the ultra-orthodox. (p. 27)

The constructivist view of identity “rejects any category that sets forward essential or core features, as the unique property of a collective’s members” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 387). Therefore, I do not analyze teacher identity in order to find a true core self of who an international teacher is, but to explore how international teachers incorporate the personal, the professional and the situated in a fluid negotiable sense (Day, 2008; Day & Kington, 2008). In a constructive sense, the term *international teacher* is also open to

an organic evolution from the perspective of the teachers. I do not use this term as a collective identity label.

A constructivist approach to identity then, offers the teacher an opportunity—not to find his/her real teacher self, but to integrate the different aspects, roles and attributes of self in a meaningful way (Britzman, 2003; Søreide, 2007; Walkington, 2005).

Additionally, this approach to identity does not ask the teacher to merely take up the position assigned to them, but to name themselves in their own voices as who they are and continue to become as teachers. In this regard, they also narrate how they have been named in certain contexts and negotiate this naming. Below I offer some theoretical perspectives that illuminate why identity matters.

Theoretical Perspectives on Identity

Identity questions such as “Who am I?” and “How do I fit in the world?” are complex (Cozart, 2009, p. 81). The answers to such questions are layered with aspects of heritage, geographical location, ones upbringing, historical and social contexts, gender and culture in addition to professional competence and myriad factors that interact to define the sense of self. However, the negotiation of identities by teachers as they engage in teaching and interacting with their colleagues and students largely impacts what happens in schools and how well relationships among various stakeholders such as students, teachers, administrators and parents function.

Different theoretical perspectives offer several reasons why identity matters. I draw from sociocultural, cultural, narrative, poststructural and professional standpoints to elucidate on the importance of understanding identity. Oftentimes, as Jenkins (2008)

points out, people seem to have a good sense of who they are and who others are (identity) as they map out their place in the world. However, there are times when identity matters and cannot be taken for granted, particularly in cross cultural contexts (Godina & Choi, 2009; Kuhn, 1996) and while undertaking international professional assignments (Kohonen, 2004, 2008; Lindgren & Wåhlin, 2001). Similarly, Gee (2000) points out that “when any human being acts and interacts in a given context, others recognize the individual as a certain ‘kind of person’ or even several different ‘kinds’ at once . . . in a given context” (p. 99). Identity in his view is therefore a useful analytic tool in education because researchers can understand the different ways that teachers, students and administrators are positioned and position themselves as *certain kinds of people* depending on the context.

From a sociocultural point of view, identity matters because it is formed through participation and practice in particular communities (Wenger, 1998). In this regard, identity is viewed as being “produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 151). Finding one’s identity in a community is directly linked to having a sense of belonging.

Nevertheless, people bring to a community their personal histories whose norms may conflict or complement the existing community (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham, & Clark, 2006). A community has its own “practices, routines, rituals, artifacts, symbols, conventions, stories and histories” (Wenger, 1998, p. 6). When teachers become a part of school communities, they have to negotiate the conflicts that may arise from the interaction between their own values and beliefs and those of the community, in a quest

to acquire a coherent sense of self. Although U.S born teachers still have to negotiate different cultural contexts in the schools they teach, the norms, values, and routines of U.S schools pose a greater challenge to international teachers.

From a cultural and ethnic perspective, identity matters because individual experiences are in a sense raced, classed and gendered (Banks & Banks, 2009; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Dolby, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). Particularly for teachers in reference to the relationships between language, culture and power in schools and advocating for teachers to reflect on their own identities, Cochran-Smith (1995) posits that

This kind of examination inevitably begins with our own histories as human beings and as educators—our own cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds and our own experiences as raced, classed, and gendered children, parents, and teachers in the world. It also includes a close look at the tacit assumptions we make about the motivations and behaviors of other children, other parents, and other teachers and about the pedagogies we deem most appropriate for learners who are like us and who are not like us. (p. 500)

These markers of identity are not static—when teachers cross borders, their cultural and ethnic identities shift in various ways. For instance a white or black South African teacher may experience personal identity shifts as she/he comes to understand and experience the historical contexts of race relations in the U.S. as opposed to their own, given the former apartheid regime in South Africa. Similarly, a white Australian male may experience teaching in the U.S. differently from a Caucasian British male because of the variation of lived diverse experiences. In this regard, binaries such being white or black may not be sufficient to interrogate cultural assumptions about such

teachers (Duarte, 2005). Similarly they may experience their students differently from white U.S. teachers or African American teachers because of their varying cultural lens. Consequently, Gosine (2002) urges educators to recognize the limits of collective identities such as those expressed in racial terms (including other group identities) and “wrestle with the reality that members of racialized and other communities do not experience and negotiate communal identities or the larger society in a uniform or consistent fashion, however much communities may sometimes attempt to foster such an impression” (p. 94).

Likewise, concerning problematizing the use of ethnic identity as a conceptual lens, Tabar (2007) asserts that a particular ethnicity as defined by a nation or state is not only challenged by “representatives” of the community concerned, but may also be subjected to criticism from various groups within the community who could hold competing and incompatible terms for defining their ethnic identity. Therefore, in his view, representing the official interpretation of a designated ethnicity becomes a challenge.

Although this study does not specifically focus on cultural-ethnic identities, participants’ stories cannot be separated from the ethnicities that shape who they are and continue to become as teachers teaching in diverse contexts. Culture is constituted in who a person is. Narrative inquiry offers the possibility of incorporating identity and culture in the stories an individual tells about him/herself. Bruner (2004), a narrative researcher affirms this possibility and posits that

Given their constructed nature and their dependence upon the cultural conventions and language usage, life narratives obviously reflect the prevailing theories about “possible lives” that are part of one’s culture. Indeed, one important way of characterizing a culture is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life. (p. 694)

Similar to a sociocultural perspective, poststructural theorists (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000) including feminist poststructural theorists (Britzman, 1994, 1995, 2003; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1997), reject the view that identity is unified and fixed and that it entails a stable core of self. However, for poststructuralists, the emphasis is on identity constituting and being constituted within relations of power and language (Britzman, 1994). According to poststructuralists, we cannot therefore consider identity without thinking of the power relations within which a teacher self emerges and works. Some of these relations of power include test taking practices, changing educational policies and other administrative relationships that require teachers to constantly reconstruct their teaching practice as they negotiate their teaching self.

In emphasizing the power of language on teacher identity discourse, Britzman (1994) reckons that

When practices become texts they must be read not as guarantees of essential truths, or as literal recipes for action, but as representations, as fabrications of particular discourses as they implicate the voices of teachers and researchers in larger interests and investments. (p. 72)

Poststructuralists thus view identity as a site for conflict, contentions and tensions as the multiple selves that make up an individual contend for some coherence. However, these multiple selves are not always “given.” They are enacted, constructed and reconstructed

as individuals participate in shifting contexts (Alcoff, 1988). In viewing identity from a poststructural lens, experience, knowledge and subjectivity are key players in the shaping of a person's identity. By *subjectivity* I mean how individuals are positioned in a certain context such as school.

Several researchers who have studied teacher identities have used poststructural thinking in their work attest to this subjectivity (Jackson, 2001; Søreide, 2006, 2007). In her research on five Norwegian elementary teachers, Søreide (2007) found that language, power and knowledge, structure the identity of the teachers in order to “produce certain understandings of teacher identity” in the policy texts (p. 126). In the policy documents, the teacher was depicted as “inclusive and pupil-centered; *concerned for the individual pupil, concerned for the social climate of the class, the teacher as care giver, the teacher as democracy oriented and the teacher as motivating and inspiring to the pupils*”(p. 134, italics in original). However, the question that Søreide (2007) raised in her work is whether teacher education programs are able to “produce” the prescribed identities among preservice teachers. A second issue that she raised from her research was that fact that since teacher identity is also constructed by other actors in the field of education and society, it remained unclear which prescribed teacher identity markers teachers are required to adhere to. This serves to show the complexity with which teacher identity is impacted by external forces.

From a narrative identity point of view human beings lead storied lives and the sense of who they are is constituted in their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Orr & Olson, 2007; Somers, 1994). Narrative is also a

portal through which human beings make meaning of their experience (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). In fact “stories, as lived and told by teachers, serve as the lens through which they understand themselves personally and professionally and through which they view the content and context of their work, including any attempts at instructional innovation” (Drake et al., 2001, p. 2). Therefore a narrative identity point of view offers a holistic way of studying and understanding the work and the lives of teachers. Several studies, such as Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002), reveal how teachers make sense of their career experiences through story.

Viewing identity from a sociocultural lens allows the voices of community to be paramount in shaping a teacher’s identity, through a poststructural lens, the voices of power and public discourse are the filters through which identity is constructed and negotiated. Through a multicultural lens the voices of race, gender and class filter through in the construction of identity. However, from a narrative point of view, the voices that shape identity are the stories of the teachers themselves through the meanings that teachers make from their own experiences whether sociocultural, personal or professional. This lens offers teachers a chance to author themselves by accessing the identity resources of their choice—community, power structures and culture. Subsequently, narrative inquiry is best suited for this study in order for the international teachers to have a chance to author their own transitions.

All these theoretical perspectives of identity are useful depending on the research goals and intentions of the inquirer. Thus in choosing a narrative approach to identity and

inquiry, I favored the voices of teachers and also considered their stories as depictions of their lived experiences as portrayed in Chapters III and IV.

Teacher Identity/Professional Identity

In line with essentialist and constructivist notions of identity, the term *teacher identity* or *professional identity* is problematic and challenging to define. One reason is because identity and role are often confused with each other and thought of as similar among preservice and practicing teachers (Britzman, 1994; Danielewicz, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Guadelli & Ousley, 2009; Walkington, 2005). Identity is who a teacher *is* while role is what a teacher *does* (Britzman, 1994; Danielewicz, 2001).

While the teacher role is prescribed by “organizations like the National Council for the Accreditation of Institutions of Teacher Education (NCATE), media, teachers and administrators, and indeed, teacher education institutions themselves as a way of asserting what makes a *good* teacher” (Guadelli & Ousley, 2009, p. 931), teacher identity is negotiable. The prescribed role of a teacher could be viewed in essentialist terms in that NCATE sets the standards that a teacher is supposed to adhere to and states what competencies a teacher is expected to possess. However, even in adhering to such standards, teachers constantly negotiate their sense of self in different teaching contexts, serving different students. This is the constructivist sense of teacher identity. What teachers do (their role) cannot be analyzed in isolation from who teachers are (their identity) because action and identity formation go hand in hand (Somers & Gibson, 1994). A narrative construction of identity highlights this important link.

The term *identity* within teacher education literature is somewhat challenging to define (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). First, some of the literature uses the term *teacher identity* to encompass both the personal and the professional aspects of teaching (Day, 2002; Day & Kington, 2008; Walkington, 2005), while other researchers such as Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermount (2000), use the term *professional identity* to refer to teachers' perception of themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts (having skills that support students' social, emotional, and moral development), and didactical experts (having skills regarding the planning, execution, and evaluation of teaching and learning processes).

Although there are variations in the definitions of teacher identity, there are some notable similarities in the literature. Rodgers and Scott (2008) note that contemporary conceptions of identity share four basic assumptions: (a) identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear upon that formation, (b) identity is formed in relation with others and involves emotions, (c) identity is shifting, unstable and multiple, and (d) identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. The first three assumptions noted by Rodgers and Scott (2008) are evident in the work of scholars such as Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004), Britzman (2003), Danielewicz (2001), Day, (2002), Day et al., (2005), Day et al., (2006), Day, (2008) and Olsen (2008a, 2008b).

The fourth assumption—identity as a construction and reconstruction of meaning through story, has been extended by the work of Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin over the last three decades. Their work offers a narrative framework of describing and

defining identity, while they acknowledge the other three assumptions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1999, 2006). In framing one's identity as a narrative, teachers may subsequently ask themselves, "Who am I in my story of teaching? Who am I in my place in the school" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 3)? The above four assumptions can be collectively conceived as personal, professional and situated contexts of identity (Day & Kington, 2008).

Negotiating identity is a continuous socially constructed process (Calhoun, 1994; Wenger, 1998), which is dynamic and influenced by context (Sarup, 1996; Weedon, 1997). A person's identity reveals a set of values, beliefs and goals that shape how an individual makes sense of his or her world and the ongoing experiences (Jenkins, 2008). Teacher identity is both a process and product of lived experiences (Olsen, 2008b). As a product, teacher identity consists of past experiences which are biographical and educational within the various contexts—social, cultural, political and professional, that a teacher lives and teaches. As a process, the sense of who a teacher is, is impacted by changes in the professional practice which warrant an identity ongoing reconstruction. The literature on identity formation among preservice teachers and among inservice teachers conveys the above ideas. In the next section I discuss teacher identity among preservice and inservice teachers separately.

Teacher Identity among Preservice and Beginning Teachers

For preservice teachers, the nature of teacher education programs in terms of scope and sequence plays to the emergence of preservice teachers as professionals (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Danielewicz, 2001; Korthagen 2004; Marsh, 2002;

Ottesen, 2007; Poulou, 2007). As student teachers progress through the teacher education programs, they evaluate the values and beliefs that have shaped their thoughts of teaching thus far, which include their own schooling biographies and childhood experiences (Britzman, 2003; Olsen, 2008a). Further, preservice teachers also develop their own self image as teachers as they make the transition from being a student to a teacher (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Sutherland et al., 2010). Marsh (2002) believes that educators at all levels “need to develop not only an understanding of why we think and act in the ways that we do but also to consider the consequences of failing to develop such an understanding” (p. 454). It is therefore crucial for preservice teachers to have an opportunity to reflect on their personal values, perceptions and behaviors, as they construct and reconstruct a professional identity in teacher education programs.

Using discourse analysis, Marsh (2002) utilized data from her child growth and development class of 17 students. In her analysis she found that the student teachers who had been accustomed to an “individual-centered discourse” during their schooling were uncomfortable with the collaborative group centered discourse that the class nurtured. According to Marsh, her deduction was that most of the students who identified themselves as white middle class individuals, felt uncomfortable with group centered discourse because it was incongruent “with their positions as members of the dominant culture” (p. 460). This kind of exploration in the university classroom is important for preservice teachers who will teach among communities that are less individual centered than the dominant culture. Preservice teachers need to learn how to negotiate their identity in relation to their students who may be culturally different from them.

In addition to university course work, the practicum experience is influential in helping preservice teachers foster a professional identity, while working under a cooperating teacher (Feiman-Nemser & Buchanan, 1985; Gratch, 2000; Jackson, 2001; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson & Fry, 2004; Zeichner, 2002). Additionally, the practicum experience offers preservice teachers an opportunity to develop a sense of belonging within the larger professional community (Sim, 2006). However, these processes of learning are non-linear and therefore complex (Britzman, 2007).

During practicum experiences, preservice teachers often face the dilemma of developing a professional identity based on what they have learned in the university classroom and what the cooperating teacher models to them (Gratch, 2000). In her study, Jackson (2001) implicated the role of culture and context as preservice teachers attempt to develop an autonomous sense of who they are as professionals in the school sites. She noted that the preservice teacher she observed became a “different” teacher in the two settings she was assigned. Jackson (2001) reckoned that in one classroom, the preservice teacher was “vibrant . . . and taking risks in her pedagogical choices,” however, in the other classroom, she was “immobile behind a podium, recited notes from the overhead projector, passed out worksheets and seemed detached from the students” (p. 387). In the two teaching contexts the preservice teacher constructed her teaching identity differently due to the opposing discourses of the teachers she worked with. In one of the classrooms the preservice teacher was able to carve out her own space to learn how to teach and develop her own voice. However in the other classroom, she was constrained by a rigid and scripted teaching structure which had been created by the cooperating teacher in that

class. Furthermore, the culture of that particular classroom was one that privileged students' ability to copy, memorize, and reproduce material for a test. There was no space for students to develop creative and critical thinking skills. Similarly, the preservice teacher did not also feel empowered to make her own pedagogical choices. This varying culture and context even within the same school site served as a contentious space for identity development. The meanings of what a teacher is and does were already assigned before she walked into the classroom.

The cooperating teacher plays an important role in facilitating the preservice teacher's sense of self to emerge. Zeichner (2002) reckons that being a good cooperating teacher is more than providing access to a classroom or modeling a particular version of good practice. It involves active mentoring and providing a safe environment for preservice teachers to take risks in their teaching practice. A three way dialogue between the preservice teacher, the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher where all these voices are honored and not silenced is pertinent for preservice teacher development (Gratch, 2000).

Apart from the role that teacher education programs play in teacher identity development, other scholars have incorporated additional salient aspects that impact teacher identity such as reasons for entering the teaching profession and prior teaching and learning experiences (Britzman, 2003; Olsen, 2008b). Britzman (2003) asserts that "if one tries to undo one's own biography through becoming a teacher one wished for as a child, one is still likely to meet an old, disappointed version of the self" (p. 2). For instance, for Jamie, one of the participants in Britzman's study, her tensions lay in

embracing an identity as a teacher while in fact she had hated school as a student. Jamie subsequently wondered who was to blame for her experience or whether or not she was personally responsible for her unfavorable schooling biography. Subsequently, she failed to reconcile her returning to an environment that she previously disliked and chose not to join the teaching profession after her practicum experience. She was unable to resolve the tensions she faced as she struggled to become part of a profession that she felt had somehow failed her as an adolescent.

On the other hand, although most people who choose to become teachers had a positive experience while in school, they may encounter students who dislike school and have to contend with students' negative attitudes towards learning. In this case, a teacher's sense of self is challenged by a learner who finds school an unfavorable space. The teacher may choose to lessen this disharmony and sometimes blame her/himself for students' negative attitudes. Thus, the teacher is faced with trying to undo the "mistakes, misrepresentations, confusion [and] conflicts" of the previous learning experiences of this student (Britzman, 2003, p. 2). Preservice and new teachers may not always have the available discourses to address such dilemmas and uncertainties in teaching.

Researchers who have explored teacher identity development of beginning teachers have looked at aspects such as perceptions of their professional identity in relation to leaving teaching (Hong, 2010; Scherff, 2008), identity development during different points of transition into teaching (Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan, 2010) and identity development of new teachers in relation to mentoring (Avalos & Aylwin, 2007; Devos, 2010). These studies reveal the importance of collaboration within

the teacher community in helping beginning teachers adjust to their professional roles. Additionally, gaining understanding on beginning teachers' shifts in identity from student teachers into the first year of teaching could enhance ways in which teacher education programs are structured (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). The beliefs that beginning teachers have about teaching and being a teacher underpin their professional identity and their judgment including their classroom behavior (Hong, 2010; Walkington, 2005). Because teacher retention of beginning teachers is of essence (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001), professional identity is one lens through which researchers can explore the contributing factors of teacher attrition.

Teacher Identity among Inservice Teachers

For inservice teachers, the major challenge of teacher identity construction and negotiation is within educational change and reform contexts (Day, 2002; Day et al., 2005; Darby, 2008; Lasky, 2005; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005) and their ongoing construction of themselves as subject matter experts (Spillane, 2000; Drake et al., 2001). Teachers therefore have to constantly reconstruct themselves as “new kinds of teachers” as they implement new practices within changing working conditions (Oslund, 2009, p. 10). Day (2002) argues that teacher identity is central to sustaining motivation, efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness; these attributes being crucial in determining whether teachers leave or stay in the profession (Olsen, 2008a). Day (2002) further stresses that although reforms may be different in every country in their content, direction and pace, they have five common factors:

- (1) They are proposed because governments believe that by intervening to change the conditions under which students learn they can accelerate achievement and somehow increase economic competitiveness.
- (2) They address implicit worries of governments concerning a perceived fragmentation of personal and social values in society.
- (3) They challenge teachers' existing practices, resulting in periods of at least temporary destabilization.
- (4) They result in an increased workload for teachers.
- (5) They do not always pay attention to teachers' identities—arguably central to motivation, efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness. (p. 679)

The literature documents that teachers often struggle to see themselves as reform agents, especially where reform mandates challenge their current values and beliefs about teaching (Day et al., 2006; Spencer, 1996; van den Berg, 2002). Where reform mandates are too loosely structured, teachers are prone to confusion about the reform expectations. On the other hand when they are too rigid, teachers feel the loss of autonomy in their work (Lasky, 2005; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). Additionally, “to undertake reform is to undertake a change in how people know and live in their professional worlds” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 156). How teachers interpret the meaning of who they are and what they are becoming as professionals is crucial within the context of educational change.

In Lasky's (2005) study, one teacher discussed the conflict she felt while teaching the new English curriculum and new assessment practices. Her beliefs about the right way to teach and the right way to assess students' work were in conflict with the new reforms. The teacher also discussed how the nature of collegiality had been impacted by reforms. Some felt that new teachers seemed to have been trained differently from older teachers, which impacted relationships.

Reforms do not just affect classroom practice—they also impact program structures in the school. In Lasky’s (2005) study, the reform changed the secondary program from five to four years. Teachers therefore had to teach similar content in a shorter time. The findings of this Canadian study revealed that the structure and content of reforms were not always consistent with the teachers’ beliefs and therefore impacted their notions of professional identity both in their classroom practice and their perception of the new school structure.

During ongoing change processes, emotions are also a significant component of teachers’ identities as teachers experience a sense of instability, fragmentation and sometimes conflict (Day & Kington, 2008; van Veen & Slegers, 2006; van Veen, Slegers & van de Ven, 2005; Zembylas, 2005). Educational change impacts the professional performance of teachers in terms of the amount of time and energy required to implement reforms. Often teachers are not involved in the design of reforms but only in their implementation (van Veen & Slegers, 2006). This leads to a loss of a sense of agency. Day and Kington (2008) offer further clarity to the relationship between emotions and identity, and make the claim that

change affects not only teachers’ work, but also how teachers feel about their work. There is an unavoidable interrelationship between cognitive and emotional identities, if only because the overwhelming evidence is that teaching demands significant personal investment . . . (p. 8)

Thus identity, emotions and change are interlinked.

Due to the ever changing educational landscape, Larabee (2000) suggests that teachers need to learn how to live with the “chronic uncertainty” of teaching. However,

the question is how teacher educators can bring the awareness to teachers that, because the educational landscape is not fixed but always shifting, their identities and how they see themselves as professionals will also be shifting and changing, even after gaining certification. Managing the shift of context and self may help inservice teachers find a sense of sustenance in and commitment to the profession.

In order to counteract the challenges on identity that teachers face during ongoing reforms, Schmidt and Datnow (2005) also suggest that teachers need to understand that in “the school change process, conflicts, tensions and disturbance to long held beliefs, ideologies, and structures are inevitable and not to be feared” (p. 962). On the other hand, reform design teams, school districts and school leaders could invest resources in educating teachers so that they are knowledgeable about the ways in which the reforms impact their current practice and ease the uncertainties and tensions involved in implementing reforms (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). In this case, teacher education programs could play a significant role in closing the gap between the design and implementation of educational changes and reform.

Further, features such as biography, which the literature suggests mainly impact preservice and beginning teachers, also impact practicing teachers. In Dan’s case, for instance, a teacher in Watson’s (2006) narrative study, his identity continued to be impacted by his biography even after having taught for more than 20 years. Owing to the fact that his educational biography was one of poverty and educational failure, he constructed himself as an “unorthodox teacher.” In her analysis, Watson asserted that though teachers are assumed to have been successful in school, Dan was not. His

biography of poverty and educational failure also contributed to him adopting “unorthodox methods of discipline” (Watson, 2006, p. 516). It was evident that Dan consistently endeavored not to treat his pupils how he had been treated within the school institution as a student. However, he created a counter-narrative for himself as a teacher in relation to his narrative as a former student. He therefore did not want his students to face the failure he had faced while in school.

For a teacher’s identity to be impacted by prior educational experiences and their reasons for joining the profession in a “healthy” way, it is important for teachers to examine “how they have been produced and reproduced through social interactions and daily negotiations, and within particular contexts” (Britzman, 1994, p. 54). This helps them create counter narratives or alternative narratives as teachers, in relation to their prior experiences, especially if they had unfavorable educational experiences. For Dan this was reflected in his claim: “*I wanted to become a teacher and I wanted to be different. And to provide kids with a different experience to the one I had*” (Watson, 2006, p. 52, italics in original).

Narrative and Identity

Identity as a construction and reconstruction of meaning through story has been extended by the work of Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin over the last three decades. Their work offers narrative as a way of describing and defining identity and lived experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1999, 2006). In framing one’s identity as a narrative, teachers may subsequently ask themselves, “Who am I in my story of teaching? Who am I in my place in the school?” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 3). In

this regard, human beings experience life individually and socially as “storied lives.” Subsequently “people shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and they also interpret their past in terms of these stories. . . . Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then first and foremost is a way of thinking about experiences” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). Human beings make meaning out of experience through narratives (Polkinghorne, 1988) including difficult life transitions (Lindgren & Wåhlin, 2001; Riessman, 1993). Hence, “stories become the means by which we make sense of our past, our present and our future, even as the stories themselves gradually ‘fuse’ with new stories as new experiences occur” (McLean, 1999, p. 78).

In educational practice, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) view narrative as a way to understand the interconnections among knowledge, context and identity. Beijgaard et al. (2004) point out that “through storytelling, teachers engage in narrative ‘theorizing’ and, based on that, teachers may further discover and shape their professional identity resulting in new or different stories” (p. 121).

Within the context of international assignments and their impact on identity, narrative has been utilized as a way to reflect on the identity shifts of expatriates (Kohonen, 2004, 2008; Lindgren & Wåhlin, 2001). Kohonen’s (2004) study of four expatriates revealed that identity construction and transformation takes place among individuals who undertake international assignments as the experience renders them an opportunity for self reflection, learning new skills and professional development. However the identity changes were varied in terms of cultural issues, managerial competencies, and personal growth. Thus, the identity changes that took place were either

“job related” or *“cultural related”* (Kohonen, 2004, p. 42, italics in original). Although their studies focus on managers and developing global leaders, their insights are useful to professionals who undertake international assignments.

Teacher Identity Themes in Relation to International Teachers

There are several themes that the literature points out that are significant in relation to international teachers. First, the literature suggests that teacher education is a crucial place where student teachers’ professional self emerges. The identity tools used in teacher education programs include course work and practicum, while working with cooperating teachers. However, teacher education programs are structured in relation to the educational values and the needs of a country. Therefore having excelled in one’s country of origin as a teacher does not guarantee being successful in teaching in another country. Second, most of the research on teacher identity development within teacher education programs largely focuses on teacher education in developed nations such as Australia, Canada, Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States. A considerable number of international teachers come from developing nations.

The role of reforms is also an important aspect to consider in relation to international teachers. For instance these teachers may take time to be aware of national policies such as No Child Left Behind and micro policies such as dress codes or subject matter policies. All these impact how teachers view their work. Below I discuss some issues that emerge from the literature on international teachers.

Recent Research on International Teachers

Recent studies on international teachers have focused on varied themes concerning teaching in foreign countries. These themes broadly include socialization and acculturation processes (Deters, 2008; Flores, 2003), teacher certification and entry into the host country's educational system (Cruickshank, 2004; Ross, 2003), challenges facing internationally trained teachers (Nakahara & Black, 2007), cross-cultural communication and pedagogical issues (Hutchison, Butler, & Fuller, 2005; Hutchison, 2006), mentoring international teachers (Hutchison & Jazzar, 2007), and stories of a teaching self in a foreign place (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001, 2004). In this section I review some recent research from several countries that have received a considerable number of international teachers namely, Israel, Canada, Australia, and the United States. I then discuss themes related to personal and professional transitional adjustment.

Personal Transitional Adjustments

Logistical problems. International teachers face various logistical problems depending on where they are coming from and their motives in wanting to teach in the U.S. Hutchison (2005) points out that, generally speaking, two groups of people choose to come to teach in America—those from other industrialized nations and those from less industrialized nations, or poorer countries. Hutchinson seems to suggest that for those relocating from less industrialized countries due to a quest for upward mobility and better living conditions do not have to consider major financial implications. However, the high cost of living in the U.S. needs to be taken into consideration even for those coming from less industrialized countries.

Hutchison (2005) further suggests that those in the first group (those from other industrialized countries) should be careful before making this move. The adjustment may require additional sums of money to make up for living abroad. For instance, in Hutchison's study, Joe a teacher from England, was careful to note that taking up an international teaching job in the U.S. for a year or two could cost a person additional costs in selling their house and even giving up their pension rights and then having to move back again. For Joe, this move had long term financial implications that needed to be considered before taking up an international job. For the second group from less industrialized countries, coming to teach in the U.S. could be seen as a way to better one's standard of living. However, even for teachers coming from less industrialized countries, the cost of living in the U.S. may be higher in comparison to living in their home countries. Additionally, even less industrialized countries teachers have pension schemes which they may need to give up when they take up an international teaching job. Furthermore, depending on the state where one goes to teach, teachers are not always highly paid. Therefore, whether one is coming from an industrialized or less industrialized country, there are financial implications to consider.

Other miscellaneous issues include insurance schemes, acquiring a social security card, credit card and driver's license and learning different traffic rules. One participant in Hutchison's (2005) study reflected on her experience in trying to get a credit card:

A year ago, I got my first credit card, and I have a pathetically low limit because people don't accept the fact that I have credit history in Europe. So they just won't accept it. So I was born the minute I got off the plane. . . . it has taken me five years to build a credit history and that was a major hassle. (p. 19)

Although these logistical adjustments are not directly related to the teaching job and may seem mundane, they can serve as a major disruption to a smooth transition.

Culture shock. In reference to living a cross cultural life both in China and in Canada, He (2002) articulated the notion of culture shock as the emotions and feelings that an individual experiences as he/she attempts to negotiate new experiences in another culture and maintain one's cultural heritage while attempting to acquire a cross cultural identity. Hutchinson (2005) reckons that symptoms of culture shock may include "irritability, anger over minor inconveniences, extreme homesickness, withdrawal from people who are different from oneself, boredom, headaches . . ." (p. 22). Therefore international teachers need to be prepared to be away from their family and friends for long periods of time. These issues were expressed by the participants in Hutchinson's study. One participant made the claim that his first year of teaching in the U.S. was his least effective teaching year because he did not have his family and friends close by.

Professional Transitional Adjustments

The literature on professional development of international teachers reveals that different countries undertake various strategies in order to ensure that international teachers adjust favorably to their education system. Additionally, the sociopolitical contexts of a country determine the immigration trends and policies that in turn affect the presence and the experiences of international teachers in different countries. In Israel, the massive immigration of professionals from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s led to the presence of Russian speaking Jews who included teachers (Remennick, 2002). In Australia and Canada, the immigration policies in recent years have led to an increased

number of professionals migrating (Deters, 2008; Cruickshank, 2004). However, these professionals face barriers to employment such as transferring of credentials and a lack of requisite English or French language skills.

In a study that compared the personal accounts of 36 former Soviet Union school teachers of mathematics and physics, 20 succeeded in remaining in the teaching profession in Israel and 16 decided to leave the profession (Remennick, 2002). These teachers faced challenges that included language demands, as they had to learn Hebrew, adherence to a different curriculum, and coping with differences in student-teacher interactions.

Using a narrative approach and the border crossing metaphor, Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) researched immigrant teachers in Israel. Their stories revealed the cultural differences of schools and having to cross religious borders between Jews and Arabs. An important theme in their stories was that finding a teaching self also required finding a sense of place between borders of culture, religion and language. Elbaz-Luwish further pointed out that because Israel is a country of immigrants, Jews were especially readily accepted and became instant citizens. Therefore, visa problems do not exist, unlike the international teachers who come to teach in the U.S.

Recent studies on internationally trained teachers in Australia include Cruickshank (2004); Cruickshank, Newell, and Cole (2003); Kostogriz and Peeler (2007), and Seah (2002). Peeler and Jane (2005) undertook a study among international teachers in Australia to investigate the impact of mentoring practices on their transition and professional identity. In the case of an experienced teacher from Korea, the study

revealed that her prior knowledge of education and teaching failed to equip her to teach in a new context, even after having studied in an Australian University. Additionally, the development of the professional self was heavily dependent on the teacher's ability to facilitate learning in the classroom, which included classroom management. Due to the micro politics in the school, two participants from Korea felt powerless in accessing peer support and stated that "staff relationships within the school were competitive" (Peeler & Jane, 2005, p. 330). One of the teachers also realized that the role assigned to the teacher in Korea was quite different from a teacher's role in Australia. In Korea the relationship between the student and the teacher was more hierarchical. Cultural value conflict in the classroom is also something international teachers face. Education is not a culture free endeavor—in fact it is almost impossible for teachers to teach without their values coming across (Gudmundsdottir, 1990; Seah, 2002). Consequently, international teachers need to be aware of the cultural values, they attached to education and the values of their host country.

Schools of education in Australia and Canada have undertaken the task of creating bridging programs for over-seas trained teachers. However, these programs are not without their complexities. In relation to creating such bridging programs, Cruickshank (2004) sought to investigate the challenges faced by international teachers in upgrading their qualifications to attain Australian accreditation. Specifically, he sought to investigate if the issues were being addressed by the school of education at the University of Sydney, using data from participants who represented 27 language/ethnic backgrounds. The study revealed that international teachers are a heterogeneous group,

and therefore “needs of the teachers depended on factors such as their individual teaching backgrounds, where they had taught and when they had completed their initial training” (Cruickshank, 2004, p. 130). Other needs ranged from knowledge of curriculum documents and examination requirements to oral and written language proficiency. The study revealed that for the program to be effective the university needs to be flexible because the needs of the international teachers range in scope.

Significance of the Literature on Conceptualizing International Teachers’ Transitional Identities

In the second chapter I have offered some theoretical perspectives on identity and why it is an important concept in research and practice. I then explored how preservice, beginning and inservice teachers construct and reconstruct their teacher identities through various personal and professional past and current experiences that shape and continue to shape who they are as teachers. Although most of the studies analyzed are based in the U.S., they offer a lens through which readers can understand how teachers’ identities impact professional practice. The studies of international teachers in other countries showcase the challenges that international teachers face as they transition from teaching in their home countries to teaching in a foreign country. These studies are contextualized to the policy structures of the host countries.

Based in the literature discussed, I conceptualize international teachers’ transitional identities guided by these concepts—teacher identity as personal, professional and situated, teacher identity in transition and teacher identity as narrative, lived through the stories that teachers tell about themselves.

Due to the wide array of concepts on identity I made choices and decisions that would help me analyze the data on the experiences of the eight international teachers. First I took a constructivist approach to identity that warrants that I view identity not as fixed and stable but as constructed within the interaction of self and others in context. Thus, the self, others and the environment are key players in identity construction and reconstruction. In this regard, individuals are impacted by the relationships they encounter and the communities they live in.

I also took into consideration that teacher identities—personal, professional and situated dimensions, are influenced by external and internal factors and previous experiences. The personal lives of teachers are connected with their professional lives, and these lives are lived within communities inside and outside of schools. Hence, personal aspects of a teacher's identity, such as being a father, a mother, a daughter or a son may have some impact on their professional life. The relationships within the person's family and social network outside of the school setting may have positive or negative impact on how teachers view themselves and their professional role. Additionally, what a person believes, values and wants to become is implicated in their identity. Hence teachers may feel personally connected to the subjects they teach, their students and colleagues. The personal and the professional have blurred borders and the integration of who a teacher is as an individual and who a teacher is as a professional is complex.

Teaching is also a profession that is governed by national and state standards in the U.S. The standards determine what teachers can or cannot do in the classroom.

Additionally, schools and school districts have policies that shape teachers' work. In this regard, educational reforms and change impact how teachers feel about their work, and they sometimes face uncertainties with the new demands that change warrants. Teachers' identities as professionals can be derived from the ongoing influence of the subjects they teach, their relationships with their students and the perception of their role.

Schools are not all homogenous communities. Specific school contexts determine how teachers feel about their work. This is the situated dimension of a teacher's identity. The local school contexts include the nature of student interaction with the teachers, the support that teachers get from the administration, the collegial relationships and the nature of the school culture and climate. The professional lives of teachers are therefore lived within a specific school context.

When international teachers begin to teach in the U.S. their identities are in transition. They have to adjust to a new work environment that may have different sociocultural norms from the ones they have been previously accustomed to. Therefore their identity may need to shift in order to become competent in the new work place. Undertaking an international assignment is a career transition where one's identity may go through changes (Kohonen, 2004). Narratives are an avenue of capturing the transitions and changes that international teachers go through during their first 5 years of teaching in the U.S. Furthermore, the stories that people tell about themselves construct who they are. Hence this study denotes teachers' transitional identities as being constructed and negotiated through narrative.

In the next chapter I examine the decisions I made concerning the methodology of this study including the choice of participants. I also interrogate my subjectivity and reflexivity in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction: Research Goals

When writing my proposal for this study, I believed that I had adequately articulated my personal, practical, and intellectual (scholarly) goals. Being in the research field allowed me to revisit my research goals and how they continued to inform the study (Maxwell, 2005). As I communicated with each participant before and during the first interview, I realized that they too were interested in my motivations for wanting to study the experiences of international teachers. I repeatedly shared these motivations, which included personal, practical and scholarly reasons. Sometimes even after an interview session, participants would revisit the matter. For some participants, switching off the tape recorder brought about rich conversations that traced my journey towards carrying out this research study. All the participants conveyed appreciation that someone was interested in their stories. Vera, an ESL teacher from Romania referred to international teachers in the U.S. as being “invisible.” Having someone interested in her story was one way of diminishing the invisibility she felt as an international teacher. Subsequently, throughout the research process, I constantly revisited my motivations as to why I was interested in the experiences of international teachers.

In qualitative research, and specifically narrative inquiry, it is necessary to understand one’s personal goals for undertaking a particular research project (Clandinin,

et al., 2007). Additionally, Corbin and Strauss (2008) affirm that “the touchstone of a potential researcher’s experience may be a valuable indicator of a potentially successful research endeavor” (p. 23). As an educator who values difference, diversity and the cause of social justice, undertaking this research offered me a chance to reflect on both my own experiences as a principal intern while undertaking graduate work and my life in the U.S. as an international student.

My practical goals focused on meeting the need to make the transition to a new school system less challenging for international teachers by identifying possible resources through their stories. As an educator who straddles both teacher education and educational leadership, the implications for this research could play a role in informing educational leaders about the professional needs of international teachers. School leaders as curricular and instructional leaders have a responsibility in making the transition of these teachers less problematic as they face a different set of students and school structures. I wanted to tell the untold stories of international teachers whose narratives are scant in the current literature so that educational leaders can be aware of their professional needs.

Maxwell (2005) emphasizes that while practical goals are focused on achieving something, intellectual goals are focused on understanding something. I therefore wanted to understand how the identities of international teachers are impacted by the transition from teaching in their home countries to teaching in the U.S. Previous research has not adequately addressed the issue of identities of international teachers. The findings could offer some useful perspective on how international teachers negotiate the personal,

professional and situated aspects of their identity in order to better their practice. I wanted to examine crossing geographical and teaching borders more as possibilities and less as limitations and discover the potential identity resources that teachers can use.

Research Questions

As earlier noted in the first chapter, the first question sought to fill the gap in the literature on the relationship between identity and transition. The second question sought to extend the literature on identities of teachers in relation to the personal, professional and situated dimensions through data from international teachers.

In so doing, I incorporated Christopher Day and his colleagues' conceptualization of identity within personal, professional, and situated dimensions. I also integrated Drake et al.'s (2001) and Spillane's (2000) definition of teacher identity that encompasses teachers' knowledge, dispositions, values, beliefs, interests and teachers' orientation towards educational change. As a result, the questions that emerged were:

- How do international teachers negotiate their identities as they transition from teaching in their countries of origin to teaching in U.S. high schools?
- What experiences impact personal, professional and situated dimensions of international teachers' identities within the context of teaching in the U.S.?

Methodology and Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature. There are four reasons as to why I selected a qualitative design. First, the research questions are *how* and *what* questions as opposed to *why* questions commonly used in quantitative research, whereby the researcher examines the relationship between variables using statistical calculations (Creswell, 1998;

Maxwell, 2005). Second, in qualitative research, the perspective of the researcher matters and is not far removed from the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Eisner, 1991; Shank, 2006). Third, in order to answer the research questions, there is a need to offer a detailed account of the experiences being studied, in this case, international teachers' identities in transition (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Fourth, qualitative inquiry "embraces new ways of looking at the world" (Shank, 2006, p. 11). In this regard, the accounts of international teachers offer potentially a different approach to understanding what it means to teach in a different country.

Consequently, understanding the meanings that international teachers attach to their identity as they transition can be best explored through "conversing, participating and interpreting" (Shank, 2006, p. 3). As a researcher, I can actively participate in the process and declare my assumptions about issues of schools, culture and society and how I situate myself as a researcher. I am "an *active learner* who can tell a story from the participants' view rather than an 'expert' who passes judgment on the participants" (Creswell, 1998, p. 18).

After clarifying why a qualitative design was best suited for my study, it was also important to elucidate the epistemological and ontological viewpoints informed by my paradigmatic commitments (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mullen, 2005; Schram, 2006). My paradigmatic commitments lean towards social constructivism with a critical lens (Burr, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemological considerations encompass the nature of knowledge, while ontological considerations draw attention to a researcher's worldview—the beliefs and attitudes about the world we live in that subsequently frame a

person's notion of reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I view knowledge as a social construction, thus acknowledging multiple realities. This position also takes into consideration that constructed realities ought to match tangible evidences as closely as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reality is not simply what individuals create, but it is also closely linked to interpretations related to social contexts and situations within the research setting. We are therefore co-constructing knowledge with the international teachers as participants in the study.

I also concur with Creswell's (1998) view of knowledge that

knowledge is within the meanings people make of it; knowledge is gained through people talking about their meanings; knowledge is laced with personal biases and values; knowledge is written in a personal, up-close way; and knowledge evolves, emerges and is inextricably tied to the context in which it is situated. (p. 19)

I view knowledge as historically, culturally and socially specific (Burr, 2003). Therefore, data analysis leaves room for readers to interact with the text and draw their own meanings. The stories of teachers are therefore open to multiple interpretations. Within the qualitative research approach, I found narrative inquiry best suited to meet my research goals of understanding the experiences of international teachers.

Narrative Inquiry

Narratives and story have been increasingly used in studies in education, particularly in teaching and teacher education, where scholars such as Freema Elbaz-Luwisch in Israel, Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin in Canada, and Ivor Goodson in the United Kingdom have set the stage over the past three decades in studying the lives and work of teachers. Although each of these scholars offer their own uniqueness in

storying the teacher, they all concur that understanding the lives and the work of teachers and linking these to the larger social-historical contexts offers a multidimensional and multivoiced portrayal of the complexities and the possibilities that teaching entails.

Casey (1995) used the term *narrative research* to encompass different forms of life stories and personal narratives among teachers. These include biographies, autobiographies, ethnographies and any other forms of research that involve the collection and analysis of people's lives through story. She also noted the interdisciplinary nature of narrative research which encompasses elements of "literary, historical, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and cultural studies" (Casey, 1995, p. 212). Researchers offer several reasons why narrative inquiry has taken a prominent place in understanding the experiences of individuals including teachers. Story is a mode of knowing and thinking that cannot be reduced to abstract rules and logical propositions about teaching (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Additionally, since stories carry a temporal sequence (though told in the present time) they capture the complexity and interconnectedness of the past, present and the hopes for the future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McLean, 1999). Stories connect the self and the actions of people. In other words, they convey the "storied knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social processes, academic tasks and students' understandings and intentions" (Carter, 1993, p. 7). Specifically, teachers use stories as a way to order their professional lives.

Narratives of teachers can be used to capture the "teacher voice" and in so doing, distinguish their perspectives from other voices, such as educational reformers, who

speak to who a teacher is (Britzman, 2003; Diamond, 1993). Sometimes the voices of teachers and those of educational reforms are contradictory. Such contradictions are explored through narratives in order for teacher educators to help teachers find a coherent sense of self. Additionally, narratives are an avenue for teachers to gain their “narrative authority” as opposed to the dominant “institutional narratives” of who teachers are and what they do (Craig, 2001; Olson, 1995). They offer an opportunity for teachers to author themselves and thus open spaces for teachers to develop new understandings of the stories they live and tell about the profession.

As noted in Chapter II, the relationship between narrative and identity is important because identity is constituted in the stories people tell about themselves. In fact, Casey (1995) notes that, “whether implicit or elaborated, every study of narrative is based on a particular understanding of the speaker’s self” (p. 213). Narrative therefore serves as an avenue that depicts the identity of the teacher. An important feature of narrative is that it is both a phenomenon and a research methodology. However, not all scholars use narrative in this manner (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). There are differences of opinion on the epistemological, ideological and ontological commitments of narrative inquirers (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). For instance Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) make a distinction between their view of narrative inquiry and poststructuralists who may engage in narrative inquiry:

The poststructuralist however may listen to stories that individuals tell her or him. But in so doing she or he will not interpret those experiences as immediate sources of knowledge and insight; instead, she or he will be listening through the person’s story to hear the operation of broader social discourses shaping the person’s story of their experience. (p. 55)

Such is the case of Søreide's work (2006, 2007) (discussed in Chapter II) where she utilized narrative with a poststructural lens.

As a phenomenon, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) make the claim that human beings individually and socially lead storied lives. These storied lives are then termed as experience. Other narrative researchers, such as Bruner (1986), consent to this view and define narrative as “a distinctive way of ordering experience and constructing reality” (p. 11). In taking a similar stance, Polkinghorne (1988) refers to narrative as “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (p. 10). Thus the notion of experience is at the center of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Narrative inquiry is thus a way of interpreting lived experience (Bruner, 1986; Shields, 2005) and constructing identity (Søreide, 2007; Watson, 2006). The phenomenon I sought to study was teachers' transitional narratives of experience that in turn articulated their identity.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) further clarify that the phenomenon is *story* and the inquiry is *narrative*:

Story in the current idiom is a portal through which the person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. (p. 375)

The narrative carries the organization, which the researcher and the participant jointly discover through telling and retelling of the stories. In this study, I collected the stories from the teachers and restoried them to form transitional narratives of becoming international teachers.

Research Participants

Beginning the process of selecting the research participants required that I make decisions regarding the size of my sample and the criteria I would use to select the participants. The potential participants included those who had taught in the U.S. up to 5 years, a variety of content area, nationality and a balance of gender. Age or previous years of teaching experience before coming to the U.S. were not factors that I considered. However, I was unable to find male teachers except for one who was unavailable for the second interview and therefore the data from him was incomplete.

The economic down turn also played a role in accessibility of possible research participants. Many international teachers in the surrounding school districts where I was undertaking the study had gone back to their home countries at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year, due to the job cuts. Nonetheless, the stories of the eight participant international teachers still provided rich data that offered both similar and diverse perspectives. Because the literature suggests that the presence of international teachers has been warranted by the need to have globally competent students upon graduation in high school, I focused on high school teachers for consistency.

Identities of high school teachers bear the uniqueness of many of them identifying themselves with the subjects they teach (Gess-Newsome, 1999; Helms, 1998; Stodolsky, & Grossman, 1995) although elementary and middle school teachers' identities are also shaped by content area though in differing ways (Drake et al., 2001; Spillane, 2000). In order to access the participants, I engaged in a purposeful selection, taking into consideration the above criteria (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). I identified "information

rich” participants from whom I could learn “a great deal of issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 2002, p. 246). There were some potential participants to whom I was introduced who did not fit the criteria of the study. These included middle school teachers and those who had stayed in the U.S. for more than 5 years. Some of the teachers had already been able to acquire a green card and therefore had become permanent residents. All the teachers had a temporary work visa that allowed them to work in the U.S. for 3 years and could have their visas renewed for an additional 2 years.

Contacting and Meeting the Participants

Gwenn was the first research participant I met. I was introduced to her by a professional colleague at the university. Her description matched the purpose of the study. She contacted me during the summer of 2010. However, it was not until the beginning of the fall semester that we were able to schedule an interview. Gwenn shared about the study with Mary and who also contacted me and agreed to become part of the study. I was introduced to Charity by another international teacher who could not be part of the study because he was already a U.S. resident. Charity connected me with Perla and Vera. Vera then introduced me to Naomi and Nancy, while Perla introduced me to Rhonda.

Overall, the process of finding potential participants for the study was initially difficult due to the job cuts in the surrounding school districts. The nearest school district, which had had over 40 international teachers, had only six at the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year all of whom were Spanish or ESL teachers except for one. I travelled

a radius of 100 miles to the surrounding school districts. After an initial introduction to the research through email correspondence and agreeing to participate, each of the participants signed two consent forms. I kept one and the participants retained a copy.

To ensure confidentiality, the names of the participants have been changed. Additionally, there is no mention of the school districts where they teach or their recruiting agencies. The participants came from three different school districts. Gwenn and Mary taught in the same school. Nancy taught in the same school district with Gwenn and Mary. Charity, Perla, Naomi, and Vera taught in the same school district, but in different schools. Rhonda taught in a different school district, and she was the one that I had to travel furthest to interview.

Ethics in the Study

In order to ensure that I treated the participants in an ethical manner, I first observed all the requirements of the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro before undertaking the research (see Appendix A) Each participant also signed two copies of an informed consent form before the first interview (see Appendix B). I protected their identity by using pseudonyms and not naming the schools where they were currently teaching. I maintained confidentiality by keeping all the research data and consent forms in a locked cabinet in my home.

In presenting the stories, I once again took into consideration that the participants and I are co-constructors of the stories. What they chose to reveal or not reveal was significant to the meaning of their story and I needed be respectful of this. Sometimes there was some information that they revealed in the interviews that they requested that I

not put in print form. I honored their requests. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe narrative inquiry as relational work that involves co-construction of the story between the researcher and the participants.

I learned that I needed to close the distance and diminish the sense of separation between myself and the participants in order to promote authentic dialogue rather than the feeling of being interrogated on the part of the participants (Douglas, 1985; Ellis & Berger, 2003). Participants such as Naomi and Charity were interested in their own pursuits in higher education and I took time to share the information I knew. Charity had just completed her masters and wanted to learn about the possibility of pursuing a doctorate in future. Mary was preparing to enroll in a master's program, and I told her that if she ever needed support for the process, I would help her. In spring 2011, she began the master's program. I endeavored not to treat the participants simply as data sources for my dissertation but to honor them as individuals as well as their stories. I realized that though our educational biographies were diverse and our career aspirations were different, we shared a love for "more education." In this regard, we exchanged a reciprocal affirmation because

Narrative inquiry is, however, a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds. In the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4)

Negotiating entry into the research field required that as a researcher, I encourage the process of sharing "the narrative unities of our lives" (Huber & Clandinin, 2002, p.

797). It was also necessary to develop a relationship with my participants long before the first interview. This was evidenced by email communication, which averaged about 20 emails per participant as well as about five phone calls, from the initial correspondence to the completion of the study. Some participants preferred phone conversations while others preferred emails, and some a blend of both. I used whatever form of communication best suited each of them. As Clandinin and Connelly (1990) affirm, narrative inquiry occurs within relationships between researchers and participants.

I also took into consideration that the stories of school were interwoven with personal stories, while adequately managing the multiple voices in the stories. We therefore went back and forth several times to ensure that the written text was ethically constitutive of their lives and did not jeopardize their privacy.

Table 1 provides a profile of the participants in this study.

Data Collection Techniques, Management, and Analysis

Demographic Questionnaire

In order to obtain some biographical data on the international teachers, I used an initial demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C) followed by two in-depth open-ended interviews. The demographic questionnaire was a useful tool for gathering information from the participants such as age, nationality, years of teaching experience prior to teaching in the U.S., years of experience in teaching in the U.S., the content area specialty and the academic degrees attained.

Table 1. *Participants' Profiles*

Name	Age	Credentials	Country of origin	Years taught before U.S.	Years taught in the U.S.	Arrival in the U.S.	Content Area	School Demographic
Charity	36-40	BEd Home Economics, Masters in General Education	Kenya	6	4	2006	Foods and Nutrition	57% Caucasian, 26% African American, 13% Hispanic, 50% eligible for free and reduced lunch
Gwenn	36-40	BSc Hons Pharmacology MSc Human Neurobiology PGCE Secondary Science Education	UK	9	2 Had done a Fulbright in 2005-2006	2008	Biology	43% white, 41% black, 10% Asian, 5% Hispanic, 35% free and reduced lunch
Rhonda	26-30	BA Science Diploma in Sec. Ed MA in Education July 2011	New Zealand	1	2	2008	Earth Science	74% Black, 16% White, 8% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 40% eligible for free and reduced lunch
Vera	31-35	BA in History & English	Romania	2	4	2006	Sheltered English/ESL	63% White, 25% Black, 10% Hispanic, 35% eligible for free and reduced lunch
Mary	26-30	BA in modern Languages	Colombia	4	3	2007	Spanish	43% white, 41% black, 10% Asian, 5% Hispanic, 35% free and reduced lunch
Nancy	46-50	BA in Spanish & English MA in English	Argentina	25	5	2003 2008	Spanish	49% Black, 39% White, 7% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 38% eligible for free and reduced lunch

Name	Age	Credentials	Country of origin	Years taught before U.S.	Years taught in the U.S.	Arrival in the U.S.	Content Area	School Demographic
Naomi	31-35	BA in English and German, MA in British Cultural Studies, MA in Curriculum and Instruction July 2011	Romania	7	2	2008	Sheltered English/ESL	68% White, 20 % Black, 6% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 24% eligible for free and reduced lunch
Perla	36-40	BA in Language and Literature (English & Portuguese), BA in Psychology, Graduating from her masters in summer 2011	Brazil	20	3	2007	Newcomers /ESL	66% White, 21% Black, 11% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 25% eligible for free and reduced lunch

Additionally, the demographic questionnaire was useful in analyzing the data in relation to the varied level of teaching experiences among the eight international teachers.

Interviews

I conducted two face-to-face open-ended interviews with each participant using a protocol I had designed with a focus on the research questions (see Appendix D). The interview questions entailed asking the participants about personal and professional aspects of their background in addition to how they became international teachers. These interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes each. I recorded them using a digital audio tape. After the first interview with a participant, I listened to the audio tape before conducting the second interview. I made notes based on what the participant had shared in the first interview and what I thought needed more clarity for the second interview. I also took notes during each interview and immediately following the interview on the non-verbal features, tone, and the comfort level of the participants. Sometimes after an interview came to an end and I switched off the tape, the participants would offer more information that I found useful. I recorded this information in my research journal. Before the first interview, I first gave the participants a chance to ask any questions they had about the study. I once again assured them about the confidentiality of their identity.

In undertaking interviewing as a data collection process, my goal was to focus on questions that would offer possibilities in understanding the research questions, based on the interview protocol. Due to the open ended structure of the interview, the participants had an opportunity to feel more in charge of the conversation (Riessman, 1993) while I maintained the ability to “incite the production of meanings that address[ed] issues

related to particular research concerns” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p. 75). Participants did not always follow a linear fashion in the telling of their stories. I then clarified any uncertainties during the second interview and via email after the second interview. This was particularly useful because although all the participants spoke English, they came from different cultures. I wanted to avoid any potential misinterpretations and biases. Additionally, I attempted to listen empathetically (Stanley & Wise, 1983), identify with the participants, and show respect for their emotionality (Mies, 1983) while not taking the position of the “detached interviewer” (Fontana, 2003, p. 53). I also gave the participants an opportunity for self reflection after the interview. This gave them a chance to ruminate on how the research process had impacted them. Table 2 shows the interview schedule for the participants.

Table 2. *Participants’ Interview Schedule*

Name	1st Interview	2nd Interview	Place
Gwenn	August 16, 2010	September 4, 2010	Coffee shop
Charity	August 30, 2010	September 29, 2010	Her home
Mary	September 10, 2010	September 23, 2010	Coffee shop
Perla	September 7, 2010	September 22, 2010	Coffee shop
Vera	September 15, 2010	October 5, 2010	Coffee shop
Naomi	October 18, 2010	October 27, 2010	Coffee shop
Rhonda	October 26, 2010	November 8, 2010	Coffee Shop
Nancy	November 4, 2010	November 17, 2010	Her home

Transcribing the interviews. While I transcribed some of the interviews, there were some which I requested the assistance of a transcriptionist due to time constraints. She signed a confidentiality form. I then went through all the transcripts while listening to the audio tape to ensure that there was no discrepancy between the audio tape and the typed transcript (Poland, 1995). The typed transcripts consisted of features of the conversation such as pauses, laughter and some emotional moments. I listened to the audio tapes several times during the data analysis process for clarity between the audio tape and the written transcript. I then returned the transcripts to the participants for verification. Next, I retranscribed segments of the original transcriptions to facilitate the development of the story (Riessman, 1993). The participants were involved in this process to ensure that I depicted their stories with clarity. I also took into consideration that the transcript as a data source is open to multiple, alternative readings as well as reinterpretation with every fresh reading (Denzin, 1995; Kvale, 1995). I took note of this by dating the comments and changes I made on the margins of the transcripts. In qualitative research and specifically in narrative, this is a challenge that a researcher needs to keep in mind when seeking to authentically present the voice of the other in a research text, taking into consideration that “every text emerges from, and is shaped by, a specific interactional context. Talk creates its own context. Talk, text, and context shape and define one another” (Denzin, 1995, p. 315). Each participant’s story was hence shaped by the unique context of place and time.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the narratives, I coded the data within the three-dimensional structure of narratives,—*temporality* (past, present, and future), *sociality* (personal and social) and *place* (context) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), while identifying themes related to the personal, professional dimensions of identity (Day & Kington, 2008). These elements restoried an individual's experiences and enabled me as the researcher to triangulate the data from various perspectives. The data consisted of two interviews from each participant and the information from the demographic questionnaire.

Temporality

Temporality affects the way a researcher thinks. The boundaries of time are stretched in the sense that an event is “not seen as a thing happening at that moment but an expression of something happening over time. Any event or thing has a past as it appears to us and an implied future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 29). For narrative inquirers it is therefore important to understand people, places and events as entities in transition (Clandinin, et al., 2007). For instance, the practice of teachers in the classroom at each moment in time is influenced by previous experiences and practices. Therefore international teachers' past experiences influence their current teaching practices and their future aspirations. Although told in the present moment, the stories of international teachers were not only about living and teaching in the current moment. Their stories looped back and forth from the present into the future. Analysis of story through the temporal lens provided meaning into how the participants decided to become teachers and subsequently international teachers. This provided a deeper level of understanding as

to how their past experiences influenced the manner in which they negotiated their identity in the new context.

Place

Place is “the specific concrete, physical and typological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and the events take place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). In narrative inquiry, the sense of place shifts as the stories told locate the participants in a different time and context. The stories move backward and forward in time. Narrative inquirers also acknowledge that the places in which they collect the stories were in existence long before they come into the research scene and will continue to exist after the research experience is over (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Though narrative inquirers collect data within a certain time frame located in a certain place, the stories that participants share are stories with a sense of continuity. In this regard, though the place, for instance the classroom or school, is a geographical location, the stories shift, blurring the boundaries of time and place.

My analysis of the data therefore entailed taking into consideration the shifts within the teachers’ stories as their narratives moved back and forth, telling and retelling their teaching experiences in their home countries and in the U.S. The indicators of place in the data signified the shifts. The meaning the teachers made of their experiences while teaching in the U.S., were filtered through the lens of their previous experiences in their home countries.

Sociality

Stories of teachers exist in the personal and social conditions of both the researcher and the participant. Personal conditions include “feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). The personal conditions also included the logistical situations that the international teachers encountered as they transitioned to live and teach in the U.S. Riessman (2004) points out that although narratives are located in individual times and places, and are about people and their experiences, they are also about the social places that these people inhabit and the wider societies they live in. The social conditions also included the context in which the stories were told (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). A narrative inquirer sees the personal as an expression of the social and the social as an expression of the personal (Xu & Connelly, 2009) because human experience exists in context.

Another aspect of the social condition is the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) believe that this relationship is intertwined and a researcher cannot remove themselves from it—narrative inquirers are always in an inquiry relationship with participants’ lives. Thus inquirers “cannot subtract [themselves] from relationship” (p. 480). The telling of the stories in the U.S. between me as a researcher and the international teachers impacted the stories in some way.

In order to have an in-depth understanding of the experiences of international teachers, I also reconstructed the stories, through a process of “storying the stories” (McCormack, 2004) in order to offer interpretive stories of their experiences. This involved breaking down the stories into message units and rearranging these units into an

interpretive frame (Green & Wallat, 1981). I was guided by possible codes related to the research questions in terms of personal, professional and situational transitions and stories of becoming international teachers in addition to the three dimensional structure discussed above.

Validity

Maxwell (2005) uses the term validity to refer to “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation or other sort of account” (p. 106). In this study I utilized the following validity measures—interrogating my own researcher bias, investigating my own reflexivity on the study (Maxwell, 2005), collecting a rich set of data in the interviews and member checking with the participants (Merriam, 1995).

Polkinghorne (2007) asserts that narrative inquirers should be concerned with clarifying what the storied text is supposed to represent. In this regard, a narrative inquirer may ask themselves questions such as “Are the assembled texts understood to reflect their author’s life world? Are they the product of a researcher—author interaction and represent a co-construction? Are they distorted memories or projections about past events and happenings?” (p. 476). Addressing these questions as an inquirer composes the research text will help the reader to make an informed judgment about the claims resting on the written evidence. Furthermore, narrative inquirers need to elucidate their own understanding of the collected evidence. In this case, validity threats arise in narrative inquiry when the language descriptions given by participants of their experience are not an actual reflection of this meaning.

In order to ensure validity, I was also cognizant of the difference in the cultures of the participants and myself. In referencing narrative inquiry across cultures, Andrews (2007) cautions that “ what we choose to explore and how we make sense of the phenomenon we observe—is at least partially a product of our narrative identity, which in itself is located at the intersection of different cultures” (pp. 509-510). Thus for the participants and myself as a researcher, our understanding of international teaching experiences had already been in a sense transformed by the fact that these stories were told as we were located away from “home.”

My Subjectivity

Peshkin (1988) uses the term “subjectivity” to refer to the qualities that an investigator brings to the research process that affect observations and results. In his view, “these qualities have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (p. 17). I was especially aware of the three qualities that I brought to the research—my teacher development interests, my educational leadership background and the international component of my identity.

An important avenue of interrogating one’s subjectivity as a narrative inquirer is the writing of “*narrative beginnings*” (Clandinin, et al., 2007, p. 25, italics in original). Narrative beginnings speak to the narrative inquirer’s relationship to, and interest in the project. This is similar to Maxwell’s (2005) researcher identity memo. Interrogating who I am in the process helped me determine my positionality and thus declare the lens through which I interpreted the stories. For instance, my background includes both

teacher education and educational leadership. My positionality as an educator offers me unique locations when I enter a classroom or interact with teachers. There were moments when I viewed teacher stories from an educational leadership perspective and moments when I viewed their stories as one interested in teacher development. Additionally, although I had not taught in a U.S. school, I had served a year as a principal intern. I then could identify with some of their transition stories. However, I needed to honor their experiences without living my story through their story. As a narrative inquirer, I was conscious of what Cottle (2002) cautions about listening to the stories of others through our own lenses:

We often run the risk of making the story of the Other become what we wish or need it to become, not necessarily what he or she wishes or needs it to become. . . . Moreover, and in the natural evolution of the narrative, we hear the Other as we wish and need to hear him or her, not as he or she necessarily may wish or need to be heard. (p. 536)

I needed to honor the stories of the participants by affirming their respective unique positions as international teachers.

It was also pertinent to acknowledge that I entered the research project as an international student, studying in the U.S and a former middle and high school English teacher in Kenyan schools. Although I identified with some of their transitional challenges, I did not experience the everyday life of schools the teachers did. I was also cognizant of our different cultural and educational backgrounds, social and professional positions so as to avoid making assumptions during the data analysis process. Being aware of my own educational background was also significant in the data analysis

process and helped me become conscious of my subjectivity and “hear another’s [story] without immediately responding with [my] own story” (Cottle, 2002, p. 535). As an international doctoral student, researching on the experiences of international teachers, there was the potential to impose my own story on their stories.

My educational leadership preparation in graduate school allowed me to inquire about the larger school structures and how they affect teacher identity. I hence needed to balance between my teacher development and educational leadership professional interests. My international educator lens offered me the chance to investigate identity negotiation based on crossing cultural and geographical borders. Thus as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, “the narrative researcher’s experience is always a dual one, always the inquirer experiencing the experience and also being part of the experience itself” (p. 81).

My Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the process of being critically reflective as a researcher about one’s biases, theoretical dispositions, and preferences in addition to an acknowledgement of the inquirer’s place in the setting, context and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand throughout the entire process (Glesne, 2006; Schwandt, 1997). In this research process, the learning and unlearning of self as a researcher that took place consisted of dismantling some long held beliefs and affirming other beliefs about teaching, learning and leadership and additionally, constantly finding my place in the research (Kleinsasser, 2000). I tracked my own process of learning and unlearning through three written spaces—I took notes during and after the interviews in a

handwritten notebook, I also recorded my thoughts while reading the transcripts and bracketed those that were my own reflexive writing in addition to coding the themes. Additionally, I typed notes in an online research journal where I recorded my thoughts and feelings about the whole research process. Reading through these spaces helped me understand myself better as a researcher and educator. As Richardson (1994) affirms, I was writing “to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it” (p. 517). In a constructivist sense, it was a way of assembling my own identity as a researcher through the process. It was also an avenue to reveal myself to myself and subsequently reveal myself to others (Ellis & Berger, 2003).

I was a Kenyan doctoral student in the educational leadership program as I undertook this research. This impacted the way my participants viewed me. The fact that I was not an American teacher researching them caused them to view me as being one of them although I was not really one of them as I held a different position as an educator and researcher.

In reference to an anthropologist’s conversations with participants, I concur with Behar (1996) that “conversations and interactions in the field can never again be exactly reproduced. They are unique, irrecoverable, gone before they happen, always in the past even when written up in the present tense” (p. 7). It was complex to re-narrate and retell the uniqueness of each of the conversations that we shared with the participants.

Performing this research gave me the opportunity to learn a powerful lesson—
”We cross borders, but we don’t erase them; we take our borders with us” (Behar, 1993, p. 320). I realized that for most of my professional life, even before I came to the U.S., I

had been crossing borders. During my first teaching job, I crossed borders to teach in a village school where a third of the population was living with HIV Aids. It was my first exposure to a lifestyle that was especially different from the one I had been used to. I reflected on the multiple borders I crossed in order to be in a position where I was doing this kind of research: teaching in a rural village school to an international school, from teaching high school to middle school, from Nairobi, Kenya to the U.S. I had crossed multiple borders that subsequently accorded me the opportunity to research the experiences of international teachers.

Although Kleinmann and Copp (1993) caution that “ignoring or suppressing our feelings are emotional work strategies that divert the attention from the cues that ultimately help us understand those we study” (p. 33), suppressing the emotions I felt was a great temptation. I did not want to revisit some of my own experiences of crossing borders. Some of those experiences were filled with fear and uncertainty. I struggled to embrace such feelings again. Crossing borders was and still is a scary process. Listening to the stories of international teachers brought back memories of fear and uncertainty but also memories of courage. It is still difficult to find the words to tell how I came to tell the story of another (Behar, 1993), in this case international teachers. Kleinman and Copp (1993) remind us that “we must consider who we are and what we believe when we do fieldwork. Otherwise we might not see how we shape the story” (p. 13). Writing in my research journal thus helped me to better understand how I influenced the teachers’ stories in this research.

Summary

In this second chapter I have outlined how I utilize narrative inquiry in order to collect and analyze data from eight international teachers. I have also offered methodological background information on the process of narrative inquiry and why it served as a useful method to understand the experiences of international teachers as they transitioned to teaching in U.S. schools. Narrative as a method also gave the participants an opportunity to construct their own identities through story. Lastly I have interrogated my subjectivity and reflexivity and how who I am could impact how I interpret the data.

In the next chapter I offer the stories of becoming international teachers and the transitional challenges they faced including the resources they accessed to overcome the challenges.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze the transitional and socialization processes of international teachers through three dimensions of identity—the personal, professional and situated. Additionally, I sought to understand the experiences of the international teachers within a three dimensional narrative space—*temporality* (past, present, and future), *sociality* (personal and social) and *place* (context) and how these experiences shaped their identities as teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Although told and retold in the present time, (Fall 2010-Spring 2011) these stories were not only about living and teaching in the current moment. Their stories looped back and forth from the present into the past and also reflect on their hopes for the future. Additionally, their personal and professional relationships were impacted by the social worlds that they lived in and were constitutive of their stories. Furthermore the stories cut across different locations—their classrooms, both in their home countries and in the United States, their professional lives within school and their personal lives outside schools.

The stories of the international teachers were also a part of the sociocultural conditions they currently lived in and had lived in their home countries. Therefore, though they shared their experiences as personal and professional stories of transition, they were connected to the larger stories of educational reform and policy, school culture,

recruiting agencies, professional colleagues, friends and loved ones, current students and former students and all other people who had impacted their teaching lives in some way. For instance, each teacher told a story of how she was informed of the possibility of becoming an international teacher. The story of international teaching did not start with them—it started with a colleague, a friend or a significant other. The story of becoming an international teacher was hence a story that carried the voices of others.

The concept of place was a significant marker of the shifts in the teachers' stories. Although they shared their accounts while present in the U.S., their stories were located across geographical borders. The “movement” of their stories was reflected in the back and forth rendering of their experiences both in the U. S. and in their home countries. Frequently they compared both experiences. The comparative stories yielded a better understanding of who they were becoming and continued to become as international teachers. It was in their telling that they became explicitly aware of the identity shifts that had taken place over time. Comparative stories of teaching in their home countries and teaching in the U.S. drew awareness to the types of borders that the teachers had crossed. Such borders included relationship, teaching, curriculum, communication and language borders.

Temporality was reflected in the teachers' stories as they spoke of their previous personal and professional experiences in relation to the current contexts they were teaching. Additionally, the international teaching experience impacted their future career aspirations. The personal and professional development they had experienced made them view themselves sometimes differently. For instance, Mary perceived herself as a teacher

who could offer the different teaching skills she had learned to her fellow teachers in Colombia.

The data revealed that relationships played a key role in how the teachers become international teachers. Relationships were the main transitional resources that teachers narrated. The social conditions in which teachers taught was reflected in the stories they told about the schools, the students, fellow international teachers and school administrators.

The teachers mediated their previous teaching and living contexts by utilizing the transitional resources that they accessed. In the data analysis, I use the term *mediate* to refer to the process through which the international teachers filtered what they were previously used to in terms of their personal, professional and situated aspects of teaching including their values, dispositions and beliefs about education, teaching and learning, in relation to the new context. The notion of mediation stems from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that human beings develop physical, technical, symbolic tools that help them mediate their interaction with the world with their mental development. In this regard, Dysthe (2002) asserts that the "tools are intellectual and practical resources which we have access to and which we use to understand the world around us and to act on it" (p. 6).

Bearing the above concepts in mind enabled me as the researcher to restory the international teachers' accounts and interpret the data from various perspectives. The transitional identities of international teachers were the overarching construct that guided these two research questions:

- How do international teachers negotiate their identities as they transition from teaching in their countries of origin to teaching in U.S. high schools?
- What experiences impact personal, professional and situated dimensions of international teachers' identities within the context of teaching in the U.S.?

Organization of Data Analysis

I had two interview sessions with each of the eight international teachers who participated in this study. Each 60-90 minute interview occurred at a time and place convenient to the participant. Apart from two participants who chose to meet in their homes, the others preferred to meet at a coffee shop after school hours (interview schedule in Chapter III). Names of the participants have been changed to ensure anonymity.

All the eight participants for the study were high school teachers with teaching credentials from their respective countries with different teaching experiences. Charity from Kenya had taught in Botswana for 6 years before accepting a teaching job in the U.S. 2006. Her teaching subject was foods and nutrition. Gwenn had taught in her home country, UK for 9 years. She was a Fulbright scholar during the 2005-2006 academic year in the midwest and had arrived to serve a 3-year term through the recruiting agency in the U.S. in 2008. Gwenn's teaching subject was biology. Rhonda had taught in her country New Zealand for one year before taking up a teaching job in the U.S. in 2008. She taught Earth Science in the U.S. although she had been trained to teach Chemistry. Vera who was from Romania had taught her country for two years before taking up a

teaching job in the U.S. 2006. She taught ESL in the U.S and had been teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a college in Romania.

Mary had been teaching in her country Colombia for 4 years before taking up a teaching job in the U.S. in 2007. She had been teaching EFL in her country but was now teaching Spanish in the U.S. Nancy from Argentina had also been teaching EFL in her country before taking up a teaching job in the U.S. She had previously served a 3-year term gone back to her country and arrived in 2008 to begin a second 3-year term in the U.S. Naomi had been teaching in her country Romania for 7 years before beginning her teaching assignment in the U.S. in 2008. She had previously been teaching EFL and was currently teaching ESL. Perla had been teaching EFL in her home country Brazil for about 20 years before taking up a teaching job in the U.S. in 2007. She worked in a Newcomers program where she taught ESL refugee and immigrant students from different parts of the world.

The data analysis of the eight international teachers is divided into two parts. In the first part of the analysis, I present their accounts of becoming teachers and subsequently becoming international teachers. As I began to analyze the stories of the international teachers, I discovered that their identity as international teachers did not begin to emerge when they signed a contract to teach in a U.S. high school. Their identity negotiation began from the onset of their career. The decisions they made at different stages of their teaching profession impacted their story of becoming international teachers. In the second part of the data analysis I focus on the transitional challenges in

terms of the personal, professional and situated dimensions and the transitional resources the international teachers utilized to overcome some of the challenges and transitions.

Teachers' Transitional Narratives

The notion of who a good teacher is has evoked questions in research (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Britzman, 2003; Guadelli & Ousley, 2009; Korthagen, 2004). Prescribed markers are institutionally determined, such as those based on student performance. The stories of international teachers revealed commendable professional moments, such as when Charity's student obtained an opportunity to travel to China with U.S. and Chinese students, as well as when Gwenn and Vera narrated how they encouraged their students who considered dropping out to graduate. Further, the eight international teachers had withstood the test of time in circumstances where their counterparts had left or been asked to leave the assigned schools. Their stories of transition were thus also stories of courage, personal and professional growth.

According to Olsen (2008b), preservice teachers' reasons for joining the teaching profession are linked to the way in which they construct and reconstruct their teacher identities. Similarly, the participants' stories of becoming teachers and becoming international teachers revealed that their reasons for becoming teachers and taking up international assignments were a negotiation or reconstructive tool to their transitional identities in the new context. Each of their stories bore the markers of their own uniqueness while conveying the interconnected sociocultural contexts in which they lived and were teaching.

Although there are several international teacher recruiting agencies in the U.S., their arrival in the U.S was facilitated by the same agency. However, their experiences with the agency were varied and narrated through the filters of different expectations and previous experiences. Though their stories of becoming teachers and becoming international teachers are unique, the themes link to the larger story of transition to teaching in U.S. schools. One of the consequences of international assignments is identity transformation (Kohonen, 2004, 2008). An individual's identity is subject to reconstruction and negotiation during a time of career transition (Nicholson, 1984). The struggle to maintain a coherent or stable identity (though not always achieved due to competing forces) is also linked to participating in cross cultural environments (Arnett, 2002; Giddens, 1991; Jenkins, 2008). In this regard, the way in which people define themselves may change and in this case, international teachers defined themselves differently as they transitioned to teach in the U.S.

Charity's Narrative

Charity (Kenya) began her teaching story as one who did not initially want to be a teacher. She had chosen other fields such as law and economics as her preferred choice, but did not make the grade to join either program. Her story of being in the teacher education program was not one of choice but inevitability. Charity recalled how she ended up joining the teacher education program:

You know the way it is in Kenya when you're in school. You have to put your choices, the first four choices. Yeah, that was my last choice. So I actually didn't want to teach. . . . it was my last choice and that's where I landed. And I tried to change, the first two weeks the way you can change, I tried and then I couldn't change so I just gave up.

Charity completed her bachelor's degree still undecided about whether she was going to teach. In Kenya, the Teacher Service Commission is responsible for hiring and placing teachers in public schools upon completion of their program. In the past years, the process of being hired in the public schools after college was almost automatic in Kenya. However, at the point in time when Charity completed her degree in 1998, the country was going through an economic downturn and the Teacher Service Commission was no longer placing teachers. Her story revealed how such circumstances continued to set the stage for her to become an international teacher. She did not end up teaching in her home country Kenya but began her teaching career in Botswana:

I didn't even apply [to the Teacher Service Commission] so when they said then they're not hiring . . . I was like I will not bother. So my hopes were to do something different after that. And then my husband went to Botswana, that's where they wanted teachers. . . . So after that, that's where I ended up, and it was just by chance, because not all subjects were needed in Botswana so home economics was one of them, design and technology, it's like the hands-on subjects, so they had a shortage so that's how I ended up teaching there.

Although Charity did not initially choose to be a teacher, the economic circumstances of the time set the stage to her becoming an international teacher. After teaching in Botswana for 6 years, it was time once again to make another move. Charity narrated how the Botswana had been hiring a considerable number of expatriates. However, as the years went by, the government in Botswana found that hiring expatriates was expensive. In fact expatriate teachers like Charity were required to train a Tswana teacher who would eventually take her position. Therefore she always had another teacher in the classroom for most of the time she taught in Botswana. She

recalled the experience of mentoring a Tswana teacher who would eventually take up her job:

The disadvantage about them [Botswana] was that once you sign up as an expatriate, they want you to have somebody underneath you that you'll be training. Once that person is fully trained, then they don't renew the contract. So that's one disadvantage. As long as they can get a local who can do your job, then the contract is over. So you have to sign that I agree that once somebody who is local can do that job then mine is done. . . . Okay, with me I had somebody, and we still communicate because she was such a nice lady. What you do is you just show her everything. Like the team planning, like she observes you, she learns from you. And it's not going to take like just one year, it might take time. Like we've had, I think we were together almost five years, she was just learning from me and then they'll see the competence if she's good.

By the time she was serving her second contract in Botswana, Charity began looking for other teaching opportunities elsewhere as chances for a third contract seemed slim. At the time, an international recruiting agency was hiring teachers in Southern Africa to teach in the U.S. After going through the application process, Charity successfully secured a position to teach in a school district in the Southeast.

Time and place continued to influence how Charity negotiated her identity as a teacher in different geographical locations, and at different times in her teaching career. While undertaking her teacher education program in Kenya, she did not take up a teaching identity. She commented during the first interview, "I did not want to teach, it's only that I ended up there." It was not until she went to Botswana and had taught for a while that she saw herself as a teacher and actually enjoyed teaching. At the end of the second interview Charity reflected on how she felt then about teaching:

I love the profession, it's challenging because you get different students every time. So they gain the knowledge and pass, it's something that at least makes it exciting. It never gets boring, so you won't expect the same thing over and over again. And you are just expecting a different bunch this time. I have a different bunch of students, it makes it exciting.

Charity depicted how her teaching story had shifted from “not wanting to be a teacher” to “loving the profession” and even becoming a teacher mentor to her colleague in Botswana. Even when faced with several challenges while transitioning to teach in the U.S., she still narrated herself as a teacher committed to the profession.

Personal relationships also shaped her decision to go to Botswana to be with her husband. In spite of the fact that Charity did not initially want to be a teacher, during the interviews, she evidenced the shift that had taken place over time leading to viewing herself as a teacher.

The story of eventually coming to the U.S. was also a story of economic shifts in Kenya and expatriate hiring policies in Botswana. Charity learned to create her teacher story in the two different places. She also used her schooling biography in Kenya as a mediating tool. She therefore had three contextual lenses from which to view teaching and learning. This was evidenced in her comments such as when referring to the level of motivation and curriculum rigor among students in the three countries:

With Botswana I'd say it's kind of close to America in terms of the syllabus. It's not as challenging compared to the Kenyan syllabus. So it's like, oh these kids they have it easy but then I came here I was like, they have it too easy, so that's what I thought but I was like, okay, in Botswana it's not as bad in terms of the challenge . And also the interest, in Kenyans, we have an interest in education, Botswana it's a little bit low, but here it's even lower than that. You have to push them . . . because they've been given everything by the government. As you know, it's one of the richest countries in Africa because of their diamond and all

that. Basically it's kind of like here. So students don't see the need for striving hard in school.

Charity conceptualized students' enthusiasm for learning and academic rigor in relation to the economic structures of a country. In her view, because Botswana was wealthier than Kenya, then students were less eager to learn as the government would support them through the government's welfare system. She similarly perceived students in the U.S. as being less motivated because the "government gave them everything." Charity linked student motivation for learning to the larger contextual influences in society. Her identity as a teacher was also shaped by seeing her role as one in which she needed to explain to her students the need to have an education and hence assumed some personal responsibility for motivating her students to excel (Urdu & Schoenfelder, 2006).

Teaching in an international context gave Charity these varied views of how student motivation was shaped by the larger societal structures. However, her story held the contradictions and ironies that in spite of her own country being less wealthy than Botswana, it had more qualified teachers and therefore the Botswana government advertized for teachers in Kenyan newspapers.

A significant aspect of Charity's identity as a teacher was the way in which she enacted her "internationalness" in the classroom. One incident she narrated entailed a student who received an opportunity to travel to China. Her student wrote a winning essay about how having an international teacher had impacted their lives and how an opportunity to travel to China would impact their lives. Her student subsequently traveled to China for 10 days and "when she came back she had so much traveling to do because

so many people wanted to interview her. It was a good experience for her.” Charity recounted that it was also “good for the district and the school.”

Charity also detailed how she wanted her students to learn more about Africa and her country Kenya. She defined part of who she was as a teacher by offering her students an opportunity to learn about Africa and her home country Kenya:

At the door [of my classroom] I have something saying, “I’m an international teacher, ask me about my country.” Anything you want to know about my country, I have the Kenyan flag inside, I have postcards about Nairobi and all that, you have to have a cultural corner in your room, so when they come at the beginning, I tell them I’m an international teacher, I’m here to teach you foods, but at the same time I’m here to expose you to different things about Africa so that if you don’t get to go to Africa, at least you know something about it. So I tell them to ask me any questions. . . And they are really clueless about Africa. So many questions you get you’re like, you assume people know that, but they do not. They are clueless, even a teacher has once told me, “I thought Africa was one country.”

In this regard, she was able to mediate who she was as a person in terms of her heritage and who she was as a teacher. Her story revealed the frequently incorrect assumptions that teachers and students held about Africa and her country and how she responded to such assumptions. In this sense she was able to offer her students some knowledge about other world regions and cultures (Center for International Understanding, 2005; Stewart, 2007).

Gwenn’s Narrative

Similar to Charity, Gwenn (UK) began her story of teaching by situating herself as one initially not wanting to teach. Becoming a teacher was initiated by the circumstances in her life at the time in the UK. While pursuing a PhD in

neuropharmacology, the funding for her studies was discontinued. Additionally, that same week, she received news that her parents had filed for a divorce:

I lived up north in England and my family were down south and the same week that my money was pulled for the PhD my parents decided to split up and it was a case of staying up north or go home into the middle of my parents splitting up. . . . So I thought I will go into teaching. It was a way to stay in the university for another year without having to pay for it. So I went and looked around a secondary school, for a day and got accepted to the teaching program and I actually found. . . . I was quite good at it [teaching].

Gwenn's story of becoming a teacher was also layered with initial negative feelings towards the profession. Her lack of inclination towards teaching had been caused by the fact that her mother was a teacher. During the first interview, she voiced this sentiment: "I never wanted to be like my mother, the fact that she was a teacher meant that I never wanted to do it." Gwenn did not disclose what about her mother's teaching had negatively impacted her view of the profession. However, it was evident from her story that once she joined the profession she wanted to live a different story from the one she had lived through her mother's teaching. Her lack of an initial inclination towards teaching did not dictate how Gwenn felt about being a teacher once she joined the profession: "I found that I enjoyed it [teaching]. And I was really good at it and for me at the time it was a way of staying in that area of the country that I was living, with my friends, and I stayed up there for 12 years."

During the span of her teaching career in the UK, Gwenn taught in two different schools. She described the first as a "very inner city, very rough school." After teaching in this school for 3 years, she decided to "teach high ability kids who were off to

university” and moved to a different school. In her narrative Gwenn juxtaposed her two experiences:

Where there had been very bad behavior, here there was very good behavior, where there were low expectations, this school had very high expectations. So I went from being a football referee to actually being a teacher. You know I had the two extremes.

Additionally, Gwenn narrated how the experiences of teaching in the two schools in the UK helped her adjust to teaching in her current school in the U.S.

So it was a good job to have where I lived . . . but I ended up really enjoying it. I enjoyed teaching and I taught biology, chemistry and physics in that job and I stayed in that job for three years. I just taught 11-16 year olds there and I stayed. That was a very inner city, very rough school. Lots of behavior issues, lots of drugs lots of violence . . . it was not teaching it was being a football referee.

In referring to the current school she taught in the U.S, Gwenn shared how she acquired the name “governor” from her students. She had shifted from being a “football referee” to a “governor.” Her students referred to her as governor due to her discipline style.

When faced with situations that were contrary to her career and life goals, Gwenn did not allow the situation to dictate who she was—she had a way of dictating back to adverse circumstances in order to tell a different story from the one that had been offered to her by life. In her story Gwenn often defined herself as a decision maker.

Her positive disposition towards inauspicious circumstances is what led her to the path of becoming an international teacher. Although it was not usual for teachers to use funds that were allocated for professional development for an international trip, Gwenn was able to convince her principal about using a share of allocated funds for a trip to

India to see “animals in their original habit.” She redefined the meaning of what professional development meant in regards to what she felt was meaningful to her professional growth:

We had some money . . . aah we used to get teachers’ bursaries. So for instance every year we would get like five hundred pounds so that we could put it towards professional development and resources and it wasn’t supposed to go to school supplies but I kept putting it into school supplies. By the third time I got it I actually put in into a trip to India and I said that I needed to see animals in their original habitat . . . that’s how I got the trip to India . . . as a biology teacher. And I met some Canadian teachers who had done some international exchanges and I went back to England and for the first time ever on a school development they had international exchange.

Concerning the orchestration of an international exchange, Gwenn narrated her decision to engage in an international teaching experience after she got back from India:

I said to my head teacher, “I am really interested in this.” So he said to me, “It’s not for you. It’s for our leadership team.” So I don’t let anybody tell me something isn’t for me if it’s written down so, “As you have written it down, if I find my own you are not gonna stop me.” And he couldn’t really argue that because it was written down so I found the Fulbright exchange. I never thought that I would apply but I actually did, and I ended up going to the midwest for a year . . . it was supposed to be one term, like one semester, but it went really well and my head teacher, in England was very nice and extended it for a whole year for me.

Although international exchange programs were available at Gwenn’s school, they were intended for the leadership team. Upon approaching her principal, he did not seem to support the idea of her participating. She hence decided to look for an opportunity for an international teaching experience and was successful in becoming a part of the Fulbright

exchange program, which gave her the chance to teach in the midwest for one year. In referencing her response to her principal she recounted, “You are not gonna stop me.”

Gwenn’s Fulbright exchange program was something she narrated with pride. Because it was an actual exchange, she swapped both her house and school with an American teacher who went to teach in her school and lived in her house. She recounted some unpleasant experiences because the teacher she participated in the exchange with “trashed her house.” However, she did not let this negative incident overshadow the positive personal and professional experience she had in the midwest:

I had such a good time that I did not let that cloud what happened to me. But I loved America so much you know, I went back to my job in England . . . I had to be back in England for two years . . . The first year I wasn’t gonna come back out . . . but by the second year, Christmas of the second year I starting to think about it and then I starting looking in the internet for ways of coming back to America . . . I found the (agency) on the internet and without really thinking that it was going to happen and I just inquired, applied, followed the steps . . . not thinking that it was gonna happen but it did.

When I asked Gwenn why she enjoyed teaching in the U.S., she exclaimed, “I just found me out here. I really found me.” During the second interview, when I asked her about her career plans, she explained why she had left a better paying position in addition to being on an administrative track in order to take up a teaching job in the U.S:

As far as a career goes, I have a career. My long term plans are to have a family and settle. So I have a career. If I had career plans I would have stayed in the UK because in the UK I was on the management track. I was on the middle management track. Here you don’t get paid anything for middle management. In the UK you do. I was already getting the responsibility points, getting paid for middle management stuff. So I would have stayed in the UK if I was interested in a career. But I’m not interested in a career. So I don’t teach for the money, for the career. I think I teach for the kids and the love of my subject. I don’t teach for the

career, because I have a career. I want to stay for the life. . . . I want to stay for the opportunities for the relationships and the family side of things. And teaching is just a means of staying. You know teaching was a means of getting out here.

Gwenn storied her professional life intermingled with a sense of satisfaction that was not deterred by the lower pay in the U.S. Teaching was a “means of staying” in a location that made positive contributions to her personal life. Her story evidenced that she had found some coherence in her sense of self professionally and personally in the U.S. Teaching and living were concurrent aspects of her story that shaped her transition and identity. Additionally she also defined her teacher identity through her relationships with her student and her content area. This was reflected in her assertion: “I teach for the kids and for the love of my subject.”

The unfortunate occurrence of Gwenn’s parents’ divorce and her PhD funding being discontinued shaped the rest of her career path in part. Though these were ill-timed circumstances, she created a positive meaning out of the experience. The impact of the relationships she had in college led her to making the decision to stay in the same university and acquire teaching credentials. The personal and professional relationships that Gwenn developed during her Fulbright exchange contributed to her intentions to and teach in the U.S. again. Thus, relationships played a key role in shaping Gwenn’s identity as a teacher and subsequently as an international teacher. Gwenn found the U.S. a favorable place to live and work. Subsequently, she wanted to serve another contract term to teach in the U.S.

Mary's Narrative

Mary (Colombia) began sharing her story of teaching through the connections she made with her family relationships and her love for other languages. She came from a close-knit family and lived with her parents before taking up a teaching assignment in the U.S. in 2007. From an early age, Mary was inspired by her mother to become a teacher. In fact, she made the claim that she was from a “teaching family.” Upon asking her about herself and her family, she immediately connected her background to her teaching career:

Well, my family is a teachers' family. Everybody in our family is a teacher. My mom is a teacher, my two sisters are teachers. My grandfather used to be a principal and all my aunts and some of my uncles are teachers, so we have teaching in our blood. My brother is not a teacher. He always said he doesn't like that, so he's an engineer. And my father is a veterinarian, but he is retired now. So my parents just travel a lot. My passion for teaching is from my mom. My mother was an excellent teacher, now she is retired. She used to teach in elementary school. She gave me that passion for teaching. And I think that my sisters have the same passion because they love to teach.

When I asked her what was it about her mother that led her to want to become a teacher, she recounted the way her mother tried to “learn something new to teach in her classroom even after 15 to 20 years of being a teacher.” In her story of transition and other teacher stories, I identified the theme of *teacher as learner* as prevalent. She used the word “learn” at least 35 times during the two interviews. This was reflected in her use of phrases such as: “I wanted to learn other languages”; “I love to learn new things”; “Every day I am learning something new”; “It's my goal to learn new words, new information, new places or new expressions”; and “I am very happy because I have learned a lot, so many expressions.”

Watching her mother learn another language (English) as an older teacher inspired her desire for studying other languages. Additionally, there was a teacher in her high school who had lived in the U.S. for 2 years. “I got that love for English from him and I wanted to learn more languages.” She then decided to study Italian, Portuguese and French in addition to English. While her main specialization was teaching English, she was recruited to teach Spanish in the U.S.

Mary’s teaching story evidenced how she made meaning of her experience in teaching other languages and traveling to different nations:

Knowing that I study languages, and I can go to other countries to learn about that language, the people who speak that language and their lifestyle. So I apply that in my classrooms all day, the experience that I have from different countries, from Europe, or from here or from South America. So I take that to my classroom, it’s something that I have. And every day I’m learning something new. It’s my goal every day to learn new words, new information, new places or new expressions. So I’m learning every day.

Her identity as a learner and as a teacher of other languages contributed to the way she perceived herself when she began to teach in the U.S. Furthermore, visiting other countries was an avenue she used to enhance her competency in the dominant language in that country and also to learn the culture of the people. For her the concept of place impacted her view of herself as a teacher of other languages.

Although Mary had not taught in another country other than her country Colombia before teaching in the U.S., she had participated in international personal and educational experiences in Peru and Ecuador. She recounted vivid stories of each country she had been to and what she had learned from the experience. In particular, her trip to

England and Wales had a powerful impact on her language expertise and how she perceived herself as a teacher of English in her country while currently a teacher of Spanish in an English-speaking country:

England was great, it was dream that I had since I was a child. I wanted to visit London and I went there alone, I planned my trip alone. I didn't know like, well I had friends from there, but I was just like I want to go and I planned my trip and I went for Christmas. So it was very nice, I got some tours, like Stocksbridge and other towns there and other cities and I met some people there and I spent Christmas with my friends that you know. I spent Christmas with Gwenn's family. That was last year. It was great, I learned a lot about London . . . And it was really nice because one of my favorite writers was from England, so I went to visit his grave—Charles Dickens.

Mary also spoke of how the experience of visiting England empowered her feelings about speaking English in the U.S.:

I could prove that I have learned a lot of English, because I was there alone, speaking English and trying to read the signs in English, and I was fine. So that was a really big challenge for me, to go to England after two years of being here and go there to see what was happening with my English.

Initially, conversing with English speakers in the U.S. had been a challenge for Mary. She viewed the experience of visiting England, after two years of teaching in the U.S., as a positive indicator of her improvement in conversational English. Her identity as a professional in the U.S. context was affirmed through her visit to England. During the interviews, she had indicated to me her initial struggle with building relationships at school due to the language and communication barrier—"I was alone most of the time because I couldn't talk but now it's very good." Although Mary had studied English in her country and taught EFL for 4 years before teaching in the U.S., she expressed

difficulty in communicating with her colleagues because the expressions used in the school were different from how she previously spoke English in Colombia.

During the spring break of 2010, Mary took her high school class to Spain. She was able to help her students connect what she taught in the classroom with the Spanish culture. She spoke of how the experience impacted her students as they participated in the celebrations of the Holy Week in Spain as they recognized the cultural variations of similar celebrations in the U.S.:

They have parades about the saints and all the processes about Jesus life, until he died on the cross. So they saw all those things, the parades and the saints and the celebrations, they saw those things during the holy week there. The people used special plants to show that they are happy and different plants to show that they are sad. So they were amazed with that, and surprised to see this tradition that is very important for the Spanish people, that they have never seen here.

For Mary the combination of culture, language and learning was an integral part of her teaching. Even through challenging circumstances in her transition, such as her initial language barrier and teaching Spanish instead of ESL, her positive regard for learning and understanding different cultures was a resource. As she developed herself as a teacher of Spanish in the U.S., she simultaneously sought to develop her skills in spoken English.

The international teaching experience shifted Mary's teaching identity several ways. She recounted that the greatest impact that teaching in the U.S. had for her was the realization of the discrepancies that exist in learning opportunities in the U.S. and Colombia. However, even with the realization of these discrepancies, she appreciated her country and what they had. She also reflected on what she could learn from the American

way of life and made the claim that “Colombians just complain and don’t get solutions . . . but Americans . . . they work, they are very good at getting solutions fast, they apply the solutions and continue to look for other problems they can solve.” She had learned to be a “problem solver” and not “just a complainer”:

When you are Colombian and you have not left the country you do not perceive what you have there. When you leave Colombia for example, like me, and I see what’s happening in the classrooms here, the kids don’t want to study for example, and the kids in my country are trying to study but they can’t. I appreciate my country more. I have been learning more about my country, things that I didn’t know I have been learning more about Colombia. Trying to help my old school there, every time that I go to Colombia I visit that school. And I talk with those teachers and I have been trying to help that school, like changing the planning things, like showing them strategies to teach and trying to show them the ideas that I’m getting here, helping the school. My point of view about Colombia has changed. I never thought about Colombia like a great country, and now that I’m here I think that we are a really good country and we have a lot of things but we need to know how to use. We don’t know how to use the things we have in our country.

Reflecting on her teaching experience helped Mary ponder what she had learned and the larger contexts in which schools were structured. In this regard, she found a way to enact her *teacher as learner* identity by seeking opportunities to help her former school when she visited Colombia. Her experience became a source of knowledge for other teachers in her country.

Nancy’s Narrative

Among all the participants, Nancy was the oldest in age (47 years) and had the most years of teaching experience before teaching in the U.S. She had served a three-year term as an international teacher, had gone back to Argentina for two years and then returned to the U.S. for another term. She described herself as a person who is “open-

minded and not afraid of challenges.” As a person and as a teacher she valued the virtues “honesty and respect.” She narrated how these virtues were part of her classroom expectations. Additionally, although Nancy had never been married and had no children, she was family oriented. She began each of the two interviews by sharing stories about her family. She shared the responsibility of taking care of her ageing parents with her brother. Thus the personal aspects of who she was as regards to being a caregiver were sometimes in conflict with her professional pursuits. In her story, she shared the struggle of leaving her parents in order to pursue an international teaching assignment in the U.S.

Nancy had a strong bilingual background which eventually led her to the teaching profession. Her story described how her mother was keen on her maintaining and continuing to learn other languages throughout her schooling. Nancy’s schooling biography as a bilingual learner influenced her teacher identity as a teacher. She recounted how her mother ensured that she attended language classes:

I actually started in a bilingual school from kindergarten to 6th grade. Then 7th grade I started studying at another school and it wasn’t bilingual. It was a school which would have French but not as a foreign language, but just French as a learning language. You may have three hours of English during the week. And so my mom didn’t want me to stop learning English and lose everything I had already learned, so she took me to a private teacher so I continued with private lessons. It was like twice a week I think. And so I continued with my English studies, and then when I graduated from high school I entered the teachers training college.

Nancy initially wanted to be an ESL teacher in the U.S. but she was offered a position to teach Spanish because those were the positions available. The fact that Nancy identified

herself, more as a teacher of English, rather than a teacher of Spanish, proved to be one of her transitional challenges when she began teaching in the U.S.

Nancy's career started off as a Kindergarten teacher assistant before she eventually moved on to teach middle and high school. Additionally, her bilingual background and training led her to becoming a principal in a bilingual school when she returned to Argentina after her first 3-year term in the U.S. Her considerable experience as a teacher and principal in her country and her going and returning to the U.S. shaped the manner in which she viewed her professional and situated transitional challenges.

A colleague at the bilingual school where Nancy taught informed her of the possibility of teaching in the U.S:

I was working with a friend of mine. We were working in the same school, working in private school in my country, bilingual schools, or if not private schools where English is the foreign language being taught and I was working with her and one day she said we were going to go on vacation it was winter break and she said, I'm leaving, I say, why, you said we were going together to the beach and it was winter and she said, No, I'm leaving to the States.

By the second year of her friend's contract she recommended that Nancy apply for a teaching position in the U.S. During this time, Nancy was frustrated about the state of education in Argentina. In her story she told of how she thought that the policies being adopted by the education department in Argentina were not necessarily in line with the educational needs of the country:

I was kind of you know, disappointed with many things going on in my country in education, they were changing lots of things. But the worst thing is we were adopting things that corresponded to other countries but we have a different reality. It's the same as here, I can't come in and say, okay, I'm going to change

all the education in the U.S. with what worked in Argentina, it's completely different. And each class is completely different, each student is completely different, and the system, the whole system is completely different so you cannot change things like that. And so I knew things were not working in that sense, like why are we copying the French, why are we copying the Germans, and I was kind of disappointed with that. And so my friends said, "Why don't you apply?" In the end I did apply for a job to come here.

Nancy's bilingual background, the political aspects of education in Argentina and her friend's urging played a role in her becoming an international teacher. For her, teaching in the U.S. served as an avenue to step away from the discontentment she felt about education in her country. However, as Nancy continued to narrate her story of teaching in the U.S., she came to realize that disappointments in the teaching profession would perhaps always exist—only of a different kind. She also understood that educational systems and structures are not value free—they reflect the cultural norms and beliefs of that country (Seah, 2002).

Cultural aspects of teaching and learning were a significant marker in her story of transitioning to teach in the U.S. She often spoke of the cultural differences she encountered within the school and the community. One aspect that she wrestled with was dealing with the issues of race both in the classroom and in the community. She recounted how she had wanted to use the accounts of slavery as a learning opportunity in her Spanish class but was met with resistance:

And the other thing I was shocked about was discrimination. That was something I didn't understand why it was still on, this question of racism and all that stuff. I didn't understand I thought it was better, you know, dead and buried, and it was kind of a shock to me to find out it was not. Especially because I mean, I know those things happened before but . . . So it was kind of weird for me at first. Today the students were asking me, because we were talking about cotton

because we had this article in Spanish about how the cotton industry and other stuff and talked about Argentina and the culture and this and that, and one of the students started explaining and the others said, “Well that brought slavery,” and the other said, “No, no, stop, stop,” and I was like, Why? And I told them, it is part of history.

Becoming an international teacher hence required her to understand different meanings of race and culture in a different context from what she had not been used to in her home country. This required learning how to handle classroom dynamics when discussing such matters as race when they arose in her subject content.

A significant marker of her international experience was the fact that Nancy was able to meet other international teachers and learn from the experience. Her worldview was impacted by the interaction with teachers from different countries:

What is also rich about being here is . . . being in contact not only with American people but also with people from Latin American countries like Mexicans and Costa Ricans, Venezuelans, Colombian, South African countries and many others, you know, it's like it completely opened a world for me in a sense that I not only have a chance of learning more about the American culture but also about other people's cultures. And that is very rich as well. And it's amazing because sometimes you take things for granted and when you are with other people you realize that the world is not the way you imagined, in a sense that it's not just your culture, but there are many different ways of viewing probably the same thing. It's amazing. So I think that it is true when people say that when you travel, it's like it opens your mind and I think that's completely true.

Becoming an international teacher for Nancy carried the value of enhancing her knowledge of other world regions and cultures. Her identity as a person and as a teacher was impacted by juxtaposing her culture against the other cultures that she interacted with through other international teachers in addition to U.S. teachers.

Naomi's Narrative

Naomi, a 31-year-old ESL teacher had been teaching in her country Romania for 7 years before taking up a job in the U.S in 2008. She described herself as a “shy, modest person and not very assertive” who enjoys “learning foreign languages, comparing languages and understanding the roots of different languages.” However travelling is her number one hobby. She found it unfortunate that since arriving in the U.S. she had not been able to travel as she had been used to due to visa issues and expenses. It was much easier to travel to other parts of Europe from Romania.

Naomi graduated with a BA in English and German from a university in Romania in 2001. She narrated how she became a teacher and how her interest in teaching developed at an early age. The human interaction aspect of teaching and the fact that she enjoyed learning other languages influenced her to become a teacher:

I always liked it [teaching], I always liked playing with my dolls when I was a little girl. I think it's something that has always attracted me, . . . working with kids and as I said last time, I don't like sitting in an office and just being in front of a computer and typing some work for 8 hours. I like this interaction with people and offering help and laughing with them, making fun, of course I will also get angry sometimes, but that is part of it. And yeah, I've always liked it I think. And the other thing was I really like foreign languages, so I was thinking what can I do with them after I'm done, I can be an interpreter I can be a travel guide but I think being a teacher is something that I like more than being an interpreter or a travel guide. So yeah, that's why.

Time and place played a key role Naomi's story of becoming an international teacher. During our first interview Naomi reflected on the fact that three years before the interview, she would not have imagined teaching in the U.S. She therefore began her story of becoming an international teacher from the standpoint of the personal intricacies

that impacted her decision. Although Naomi was a teacher with extensive international experience, taking up a teaching job in the U.S. was a combination of chance and circumstance.

While teaching in a high school in Romania, a Peace Corps volunteer from the U.S. started working with her students. Although he worked in a different organization, he volunteered his time to teach her students American history, politics and government. Naomi and the Peace Corps volunteer subsequently began dating, and when his term of service came to an end, he asked if she would consider joining him in the U.S. as an international teacher. She remarked that until then, she was determined to “stay in Romania, buy a house, have kids, get married and not travel somewhere else.” Naomi had enjoyed international teaching experiences in other country without having to “live” in another country for an extended period. She had previously taken trips with her students to different countries in Europe including England, Germany, Ireland, France and Spain and had enjoyed working on different projects such as how different cultures took care of the environment and the difference in the educational systems:

But I did travel, before coming to the U.S. I traveled personally or with school related stuff. I traveled to other countries, mostly in Europe. But I never thought that I would actually go to a country and live there forever. I just went there on visits, on trips or school related things . . . I traveled to other countries as part of international school projects that we had at school. For example, I went with my students to Italy, and we had a project there with other schools from other European countries about the environment. Like how we can protect it, how we can avoid pollution, for example. Then we had another one in France, a similar one like this, we also went to Spain and we had a project about culture, like what was different in Romanian culture, compared to Spanish culture or Greek culture. So we went to different European countries in order to learn about their system of education, about their culture, about the different social issues that they have and then try to implement what we saw there in our own schools.

The encounter with the Peace Corps volunteer shifted her thinking about the teaching profession and she eventually applied for a teaching position in the U.S:

I was happy with my life there, I had all these projects, I was traveling a lot, my students were doing great in school and I was happy with my personal life and that's why I never thought I would leave but finally I decided to leave.

Although taking up a position to teach in the U.S. was initially motivated by wanting to be near her boyfriend, Naomi shared with me that she had not at first envisioned teaching in the U.S. for more than a year. In the beginning, it was a venture that she undertook half heartedly. However, she grew to appreciate the experience and decided to stay and complete her 3-year contract. For Naomi, becoming an international teacher in the U.S. also meant dealing with racial issues in a manner that she had not dealt with before:

Coming here really helped me open up about racism. This was an issue which at home I did not have, because 98% or 99% of our population is white, so we did not have this issue, and if we did have people of a different color, we would just see them as someone different but we would not treat them different. They were just different, they came from a different country but that didn't mean that they were inferior or something. While here I was surprised to find out that things are different and people actually still discriminate each other based on race and that kind of surprised me and maybe not challenged my values but made me appreciate them more and think about them more.

Naomi viewed her learning about how to deal with matters of race in the U.S. as something that caused her to reflect on values and beliefs about diversity. Although she claimed that she had not been treated differently, she knew of other international teachers who had experienced discrimination. Becoming an international teacher therefore caused her to think about her own national identity and consider how others were treated.

Naomi also recounted how the international teaching experience had impacted how she felt about herself:

I think I'm more confident in myself. I feel like I can do more things now on my own. In the past I used to depend more on my family, being here on my own I had to depend only on myself. And of course sometimes on my boyfriend but still he's far away, he's not here with me. So I had to depend more on myself. So I think I've become more confident and more self-reliant. Which is very important, I think for me. I've become also a little bit more mature I think because of the situations that I'm facing because of what my students bring to class about their background, the stories that they bring with them. I think all these have made me look at life and things in general with a different eye. And I think that also helps me become more mature.

An international teaching experience became an avenue for Naomi's personal and professional growth in different aspects. She considered herself as being "more mature" and "self reliant." Before living in the U.S. Naomi had lived with her parents most of her life apart from her college days. Additionally, learning about the lives of her students helped her view life differently as she not only had to deal with academic issues but also with their personal concerns. Relating with her students in this way helped her to realize that she was not only a teacher of English but sometimes a confidant.

Perla's Narrative

Perla began her career as an ESL teacher at the age of 15 in her country, Brazil. By the time she began to teach in the U.S. in 2007, she had already been teaching for about 17 years. When Perla started learning English at the age of 12, it was with the intention of becoming a flight attendant. Upon completing the Basic English course after 3 years, her school invited her to teach English to other students. Perla recounted this moment:

I started studying English when I was 12 because I wanted to be a flight attendant. Then when I was 15 I had finished what they call Basic English course. It's like three years. We have like basic, intermediate and advanced, which the total would be like five years. So I had finished that and then the school where I was studying invited me to teach kids. And then I started teaching English to kids.

The teaching experience as a teenager shifted her career choice from wanting to become a flight attendant to becoming a teacher of other languages. For Perla it was important to “fall in love” with teaching before making her college choices because it determined her career trajectory. Her identity as a teacher began to take shape long before she went to college:

And I just fell in love [with teaching] and it was important for me, because at that time, I was a junior so I had only one more year to make up my mind what I was gonna do in college. So that helped me, I was just like, I love this, I love teaching. And okay, I want to go to college and become a teacher. Since then I've never stopped. I've been in school since then. I love it, I love studying languages, learning . . . and then I went to college and then I got a degree to teach Portuguese and English . . . like language and literature.

In her story of becoming a teacher, Perla linked her inclination towards the teaching profession to her passion for learning other languages. The experience of teaching English to younger students helped her decided to join the teaching profession. Her story of becoming a teacher evidenced the multifaceted aspects of passion and opportunity.

After high school, Perla went on to attain a BA in languages and literature. After teaching for 15 years and having recently completed a second BA degree in psychology, Perla was at a point in her life when she needed a change or a break. Consequently, she

decided to go to a Canadian language institute for 24 weeks. After she got back from Canada she became a school psychologist for a short time. However, her passion for teaching and languages led her back to the classroom.

While in the second phase of her teaching career, one of the teachers at her school was teaching in the U.S. He would send posters and cards about his experiences and she became interested in a similar experience (public school teachers in Brazil can get a 3-year leave of absence and take up a teaching contract in the U.S.). Eventually she applied to the international recruiting agency and was unsuccessful. Two years later, a friend told her that the international recruiting agency was looking for ESL teachers and on her second attempt she was successful.

Perla was currently teaching English in a Newcomers program. Her students came from different countries including Congo, China, Dominican Republic and Mexico. During the interview she commented that if she had been teaching American students she was not sure if she would have been successful:

As newcomers my kids have just left their countries, they have just started a new high school. They have no idea how things work. So I kind of mold them to what I want. That makes my life easier, because from what I've heard from other teachers it's really hard sometimes. If they have been here for a long time they are coming from middle schools, you know, they have their bad habits and they bring them with them.

Perla found it easier to establish classroom structure and norms with students who had just come into the country. She also appreciated the small size of her class as compared to regular classes. Her teaching identity was closely linked with her capacity to maintain a classroom structure that in a sense resembled what she had been used to. The classroom

norms impacted her relationships with students. Perla also referenced that a friend and colleague who had terminated her contract and left because she could “not deal with teaching American students.” This was largely due to the teacher feeling disrespected by the students. The level of respect that teachers perceived from students impacted how they felt as professionals.

Perla brought a strong language identity to her classroom. She spoke of how she used her bilingual background to boost her students’ self confidence. Teachers wrongly made the assumption that she spoke Spanish since she was an ESL teacher and commented when she first arrived in the U.S: “I’m so glad there’s one more person who speaks Spanish.” Her colleagues wrongly linked being an ESL teacher to being a Spanish speaking individual. She made students understand that she did not teach them English because she knew Spanish but rather because she appreciated bilingualism:

I usually try to show the kids, look, can you see that? Because I think that boosting their confidence is really important, for my kids. You know, they feel pity for themselves, “I cannot speak English, I’m not this, and I’m not American.” I’m not either, welcome to the club. I was not born speaking English, I had to study really hard, but it’s possible. I am gonna help you. So sharing I think my background with them helps a lot because I feel we connect a little bit more and it just shows them that okay, look, you are at an advantage in this because they speak English. You are gonna speak English and Spanish, or English and Chinese or English and French. See, you’re gonna be a bilingual person, isn’t that great? So just little things that I feel like the kids need, because I think it’s all about, okay, if you feel good about yourself at school, learning has a better chance of happening. I think that’s pretty much how I try to work the kids, and sharing my own experience.

Perla used the phrase “I love teaching” least five times in the interviews. At the end of the first interview Perla remarked:

I love teaching. I love teaching and I always make sure my kids know that. That's the first thing I share with them, the first day. Look, I love teaching. I love to teach them. I love to be here, so I just don't want them to feel like, Oh she's here, but she really hates this, I don't want them to get that feeling that I'm annoyed about being here or anything like that. So I usually make sure that this is really good, I love this.

Perla's story of teaching evidenced her dedication to the teaching profession, her values of caring for her students, her display of the positive attributes of bilingualism and her strong language identity. Her sense of self as a teacher was linked to the attributes of being a caring teacher who experienced a sense of gratification in what she did and the fact that she was conversant with multiple languages. However, this sense of her teaching identity was storied through the lens of having to be perceived as one who knew Spanish. Perla seemed surprised by the notion that ESL teachers should know Spanish (according to the comments she received from some of her colleagues).

Rhonda's Narrative

Rhonda was a 26-year-old science teacher from New Zealand who had taught for one year in her country before taking a teaching job in the U.S. in 2008. She was in her third year of teaching in the U.S. in an urban high school. She had a biochemistry degree, a teaching diploma and expected to complete a master's in education in summer 2011. Rhonda described her school in Auckland, New Zealand as a "diverse urban school, with varied socioeconomic backgrounds and really liked it." However, her teaching experience in her former school in New Zealand did not translate to her capacity to cope adequately with the teaching experience in the U.S. in a way that she felt was in line with her professional identity. She described her current school as being in a "high poverty zone"

with “kids from all over America as well as kids who had not travelled outside their county.” Perla and Naomi had encouraged me to meet Rhonda. They both told me that she taught in a “rough school” and therefore her experience was different from their own. Upon our meeting, Rhonda began her story from the point that her teaching career was ending:

I was taking the dental admissions test. I’m not planning on teaching anymore outside of this year. I actually have an unusual situation because I married an American earlier this year, and so I’m looking at staying here for longer than the agency contract. And I really don’t want to teach anymore in the U.S. It’s too different from what I was used to and I just can’t reconcile.

Right from the onset of the interview, Rhonda conveyed about her struggle teaching in the U.S. She later shared the aspects of teaching in the U.S that she felt were opposing differences in terms of her definition of professionalism.

Rhonda had a unique motivation to teach in the U.S. She had been teaching in her country New Zealand for one year when she came to hike mountains in the U.S. Northwest. She described herself as being an “outdoorsy person, who likes tracking, hiking and swimming.” While on the hiking trip she met an American man and started dating. After three weeks she went back to her country and began to seek a teaching opportunity in the U.S:

Well, I went home and this was in July of 2007 and we stayed in touch and I came over in January of 2008 and I was here for two months and we travelled around America. And we just sort of talked about me coming over here and working, not wanting to get married straight away, we needed time to get to know each other which is impossible when you’re that far away and I actually Google searched international teaching [state] and the [recruiting agency] homepage popped up while I was here.

Rhonda described herself as coming from a teaching family:

My two grandparents and both my parents and lots of uncles are teachers. And so education has always been really important to our family and something that we value and I still do value it, so teaching's been fitting with what I regard as important for young people. And I'm a real family person as well. It might not seem it because I live on the other side of the world to my family but they are the most important thing to me.

Her values about education and teaching had been largely shaped by her background and family of teachers. Thus her biography was closely reflected to how she defined herself as a teacher. Rhonda was unable to reconcile the expectations of teaching that she held with the context of teaching in the U.S. She intended to leave teaching after the 2010-2011 academic year. She gave the following reasons for wanting to leave:

The kids are not motivated at all. They're not independent learners they don't do anything unless it's worth a grade, there is a focus on grading everything and not on them learning for learning's sake. Everything is geared toward standardized tests. The schools are not nice environments. They're dirty and noisy and there are constant interruptions with the intercom and the telephone and kids getting pulled out. And my class sizes this year are an average of about 35 in each class, of which students are more than the chairs in the room. And I am just . . . it's very different in New Zealand.

In the second interview Rhonda further explained why she had to leave teaching:

Overall the experience has been fun. In terms of teaching I think it's been more of an eye opener. I think you value more what you're accustomed to back home. and I really, I don't want to lose that, that's the other reason that I would not be keen to carry on teaching here, is that I don't want to change my view of education which is what I was brought up on from two high school teachers and my degrees that I have and the experience that I had teaching in New Zealand, I don't want to lose my vision of it, and if I carried on teaching in this particular environment it would wear down what I believe in and I don't want to be someone who sees

education as not the best thing ever, so I can't really carry on with it here. Which is sad, but it's honestly the truth, I don't want to lose my view of it.

For her to maintain the value she attached to the teaching profession and education as a whole, Rhonda felt that she needed to quit teaching. She was unable to negotiate the meaning she had previously attached to teacher professionalism and the expectations she had for students with her current context. In the second part of this chapter, Rhonda's story depicts professional and situated challenges that she was unable to reconcile with her teacher identity.

Rhonda shared how she enacted her "internationalness" in her classroom by discussing differences in experiencing diversity in the U.S. and New Zealand. She also indicated how her students viewed her: "I feel like they think I am from another planet so far away . . . I really like talking about my country in school because the students have really never heard of New Zealand before and if they have heard of it, they do not know where it is." Some students had a difficult time understanding if she was "White" and were interested in learning about the "racial mix" in New Zealand. Rhonda explained how shared with her students about the issues of diversity from her perspective:

The multicultural thing about New Zealand is something they're also interested in. "Are there African Americans in New Zealand?" Yeah, there are people from all over the world there. "Oh, what about people from . . ." Then they sort of go through the list of different countries and want to know about them. That's kind of something that they find interesting and also the black and white thing here where they seem obsessed with categorizing people black, white or Hispanic. And beyond the three categories, they're not used to being confronted with anything beyond those three categories. So when I talk about there being people from Asia in New Zealand, but not just being from Asia being from different countries from Asia, and really you know, going categorizing Asian and categorizing African,

you know, that's new to them, that whole concept of having more than three types of people in one country. So I talk about that a lot.

In teaching in the U.S., Rhonda took the opportunity in her classroom to help her students develop a perspective in how they viewed different people from other parts of the world. The impact of ethnicity and nationality in how her students thought of individuals from different places was evident in her interactions about multiculturalism. It was therefore an opportunity for them to understand diversity from a different standpoint.

Vera's Narrative

Vera, an ESL teacher in her mid thirties from Romania, began to teach in the U.S. in 2006. Previously, she had taught high school, middle school and college. She had been teaching English and History in Romania, but was currently teaching sheltered English and History. Vera had been a secretary before becoming a teacher. During the evenings, she also tutored English to 6 to 10 students every week. About her life in Romania, she described herself as “not being very adventurous because [she] could not afford to be very adventurous” due to the cost. She described herself as “happy, optimistic, and one who loves challenges.” In her story she also maintained that students were the reason why she got up every day and went to work. However, initially Vera did not want to become a teacher. Nonetheless her inclination towards languages and specifically English led her to join the teaching profession. Although Vera wrestled with the poor pay that teachers received in Romania, offering tutoring lessons to students after school hours and on the weekends earned her extra pay which helped her maintain her passion for languages through teaching:

I really didn't want to go into teaching because I knew what it meant and how little money you make as a teacher, but there were no other options because I wanted to do something with English. And if that meant to teach it, then so be it. So that is how I got into teaching. Now I love it and wouldn't do anything else.

In 2004, Vera visited a high school in Spain where she taught English for 6 months. The experience of living in Spain and experiencing another culture sparked her desire to teach in another country. This experience also helped her improve her Spanish skills:

I knew Spanish before but I got a chance to improve it and learn more while teaching English in Spain. That was an awesome experience. My first time leaving my country, my first time living by myself and taking care of myself . . . but I loved it, it was fun, I would go back there tomorrow if I could.

The opportunity to teach in Spain for 6 months was presented to her by one of her former professors and she decided to apply. Concerning coming to teach in the U.S., Vera's father heard about a company in Europe that was recruiting teachers to teach in the UK. However when Vera performed a Google search, the first agency that came up was the one recruiting teachers to teach in the U.S. and so she decided to apply and was successful.

Vera was prompted towards international teaching experiences through the relationships with those who were close to her—her former professor and her father. Additionally the need for ESL teachers in U.S. schools at the time was advantageous to her because she met the criteria.

Vera described her teaching experience in the U.S. as one that influenced her values about social justice and equitable education for all especially the Hispanic students she taught:

I saw lots of discrimination against them, a lot of prejudice and disrespect like they can't think or speak or write because they are Hispanic. Really!! Have you asked them, do they know that? I saw a lot of discrimination and prejudice from other teachers so one of my teaching philosophies is justice and equality for everybody. It does not matter where they come from it's our job to teach them and do our best to teach them.

Her teaching experience in the U.S. gave her an opportunity to be more explicit about her stance on issues that she had not previously dealt with before such as discrimination against Hispanic students. Thus, becoming an international teacher in the U.S. also meant being an advocate for Hispanic students and often she “kept an eye on them” including those she was not currently teaching.

A major impact of Vera's international teaching experience was the manner in which she understood the role of ESL programs in the U.S. and specifically her school. She learned to deal with the politics and the bureaucracy involved in order to be an advocate for her students and credited the ESL director at the district level for pushing for resources for the ESL program. In watching the ESL county director “really fight for them” she learned how to be an advocate for her students as she felt that “the decisions that are made in the county and the school do not help or support ESL students.” Her identity as a teacher in the U.S. then shifted to incorporating an advocacy role.

Becoming International Teachers

The goal of educational reforms that call for a focus on global competency is to ensure that students graduating from high schools have the necessary skill-sets that warrant them a competitive edge in the job market, both nationally and worldwide (Day, 2002; Day et al., 2005; Day & Smethem, 2009; Hargreaves, 2000). Other reform

initiatives offer reasons for hiring international teachers such as the shortage of teachers of math, science, foreign language and ESL (American Federation of Teachers, 2009). However, the narratives of becoming international teachers in the U.S. speak to a different kind of context than the one portrayed by the narratives of reform. Each teacher had a unique story pertaining to the intentions and the circumstances through which they became international teachers. Additionally, their enactment of “internationalness” is not a definitive prescribed process by the schools.

Charity’s initial teaching experience in Botswana was due to chance and circumstance. Her husband had gotten a job there and the Teacher Service Commission was not employing teachers at the point in time when she graduated. Gwenn and Perla became international teachers through a calculated professional intentionality, while for Naomi and Rhonda it was a combination of both professional and personal intentionality. For Vera and Nancy, though it was a calculated professional intentionality, they were nudged to make the move by people close to them—Nancy’s, friend and colleague and Vera’s father. Her continuous passion for languages and the inspiration from a fellow teacher who had taught in the U.S., led Mary to accept a teaching position in the U.S. Teacher intentionality, chance and circumstance all played a role. Additionally for the teachers who came to teach ESL, there was a strong pull towards teaching in international contexts. Next, I discuss the transitional challenges and the resources that international teachers accessed in order to facilitate their living and teaching in the U.S context.

Transitions and Challenges

The stories of the international teachers revealed that although the transitions and challenges international teachers experienced were varied, they conveyed recurring themes. The variations of the challenges and transitions were dependent upon the teachers' previous experiences, their personality, and the transitional resources that were accessible to them as they negotiated their identity in the new context. Additionally, teachers' transitions were also impacted by the relationships they experienced in the specific schools and community. Time also played a role in narrating the intensity of the challenges. Some referred to the fact that if I had interviewed them during the first year of their teaching, they would perhaps have told a different story. Others like Rhonda pointed out that if I had interviewed her the previous week, her story might have carried an even deeper "negative spin" because they had had a student arrested that week due to an altercation. The intensity with which they narrated their challenges was mediated by time—some challenges seemed less intense at the point in time of the interview.

Logistical and personal transitions were no longer a major challenge for most of the international teachers. For instance, although many of them still missed their families, they had adjusted to other means of communication such as Skype, email, chats and phone calls. Some of the professional and situated aspects of transitions were ongoing, such as relationships with students and other colleagues. This warranted the continuous negotiation of their teacher identity. I discuss the personal, professional and situated aspects of their transitions and challenges. The stories that depict the transitions and

challenges of the international teachers are not necessarily the only adjustments that the participants faced but those they chose to share. As Goodson (1998) points out,

A story is never just a story—it is a statement of belief, of morality, it speaks about values. Stories can carry loud messages both in what they say and what they don't say. They may accept political priorities without comment, or they may challenge those priorities. (p. 12)

Hence, the stories convey both the priorities and the silences of the participants. Table 3 represents the transitions and challenges shared by the participants.

Personal Transitions and Challenges

The personal transitions and challenges included logistical issues such as acquiring a car, a driver's license and the process of renting a place to stay. Other personal transitions that were not logistical entailed dealing with the loneliness that came with leaving their families particularly for Naomi, Perla and Vera who previously lived with their parents before taking up teaching positions in the U.S. Nancy's challenge lay in the complexities of dealing with her aging parents while being a continent away.

Logistical challenges. Charity, Vera, and Naomi struggled with the intricacies of purchasing or leasing a car and learning how to drive on the interstate. Charity spoke of the pressure of having to take a driving test the day after she arrived:

Okay first thing first . . . the driving on the other side, when we drove in Botswana we kept left. But when we came here on that Sunday they take you for a driving test and you have to pass it for you to be able to get into the program. So I arrived on Saturday and on Sunday I had a driving test, on the right side. If you don't pass it, there are a number of teachers who have been sent back because of that. Because it's dangerous, we have had a couple who have died because of accidents, so they're strict on that. So you arrive on Saturday, Sunday you do the driving test, you pass you're fine. Now you continue the rest of the orientation.

No time to practice. If you fail, they'll try one more time at least you get time to practice and they take you all the way to the interstate, one that you've never seen before. . . . It was hard but anyway, just the determination.

Table 3. *Transitions and Challenges of International Teachers*

Participant	Personal	Professional	Situated
Charity	Loneliness, logistical challenges	School structure, Teaching style, paper work and grading	Student-teacher relationships, communication barriers, student motivation, collegial relationships, relationships with the administration
Gwenn	Loneliness, illness	Paper work and grading, work loads	Student-teacher relationships, communication barrier, student motivation, collegial relationships
Mary	Loneliness, illness	School structure, Teaching a different subject, paper work and grading, work load	Student-teacher relationships, communication barrier, language barrier, collegial relationships, relationships with the administration
Nancy	Dealing with aging parents, logistical challenges, illness	School structure, Teaching a different subject, professional development, technology	Student-teacher relationships, language barrier, relationships with the administration
Naomi	Logistical challenges, Loneliness	Teaching a different subject	Student-teacher relationships, communication barrier, language barrier
Perla	Loneliness	Paper work, work load	Student-teacher relationships, collegial relationships, parent-teacher relationships
Rhonda	Narrated none	Teaching a different subject, teaching style, communication barrier, paper work and grading, work loads	Student-teacher relationships, collegial relationships, parent-teacher relationships
Vera	Loneliness, logistical challenges	Paper work, work load.	Student-teacher relationships, communication barrier, language barrier, collegial relationships, parent-teacher relationships

Charity also mentioned that she was not familiar with or well informed about the options that the recruiting agency offered them concerning the process of obtaining a car:

You are supposed to have either decided whether you're leasing a car, buying a car or you're renting. So you'll find your car waiting for you. So I found a car waiting for me and I had to follow this local advisor . . . it was hard, that was a challenge.

Vera's fear of driving in the U.S. was a major challenge because she had not had a lot of driving experience in her home country. She spoke of being "afraid to drive" and recounted how for the first 6 months she only went to school and to the grocery store, and avoided the highways for the first two years. Gwenn did not face the challenge of taking a driving test because she had already driven in the U.S. before while teaching in the midwest. However other logistical challenges were eased by her friends who came from the midwest and helped her set up her new home and get ready for the upcoming school year. Rhonda's boyfriend took care of most of the logistical issues. She recalled the car issue when they arrived as international teachers:

People were very stressed out about the car thing. Because they had the leasing company there and they were trying to recruit people and it was one of the things that was intimidating to people and if I hadn't had it set up already it would have been for me.

Logistical issues such as buying a car or renting an apartment can seem to be common place. However when coming from another country and a person has no credit history and teachers have a very short time to settle in the new life before the school year begins, such issues can be a challenge. The role played by the recruiting agency in

easing these logistical issues received mixed reviews. While some appreciated that the agency provided a driving test before having them undergo the state driving test, some felt that the time was too short for them to get accustomed to learning to drive in the U.S., take the driving test and make a decision about leasing or buying a car.

Loneliness. Gwenn, Mary and Perla narrated the challenge of feeling lonely when they first arrived. Gwenn recounted experiencing loneliness both in the midwest as a Fulbright scholar and in the Southeast when she took up the 3-year contract:

The greatest personal challenge was probably the loneliness. Very very lonely, hugely lonely, because where I was in [the midwest] it was in the middle of nowhere. So with no friends no family, and there was very little to do, even though there may be a lot to do I mean it's been very lonely, it's difficult to find things to do all the time, I mean, since I came here, I knew that I had to find something to do immediately.

Naomi expressed how she cried almost every night in the first month and the difficulty she experienced in trying to make friends. She had been living with her parents before relocating to the U.S. and it was difficult to adjust to living on her own and not knowing anyone in the U.S. except for her boyfriend who lived 6 hours away. Naomi perceived her age to be an inhibition to easily making new friends:

I was also at an age when it's not so easy. [To make new friends] You cannot make friends so fast and easily. I mean, it's not like when I was a teenager and I could meet so many people, we could hang out and go to a bar or club or whatever and then just have fun.

Perla shared that she would cry while driving home from school and the fact that her apartment did not feel like home:

At the end of the school day after work, I'd be like, oh I'm going . . . (she could not say the word "home") and there were days when I would drive home and I would cry my eyes out on my way, because Brazilians are very family oriented. You know. So we don't, we live with our parents until we get married. We are very close. My family in particular, we are very, very close. We're very close. So that was really hard for me, I got really homesick. At the beginning, I was enjoying the fun. Every weekend I would do something different. I traveled a lot. But after four months that's when they say that the honeymoon is over. That hit me hard. So it was really hard to get used to the idea. I was also sharing the apartment with a roommate who is also Brazilian, who is great. So that helped. And I had support from two other great friends. But it still, it's not easy, you know, getting used to everything.

Vera learned to engage in different activities after school as she was previously used to spending time with her family. She lived with her family before moving to the U.S. She then enrolled in the local YMCA and trained in Zumba. Subsequently she also became involved as an advisor in her school for the Latin dance club and the Stand club, a student anti-genocide coalition.

Family. Nancy's personal challenge entailed dealing with aging parents when she was far away from home. She also fell ill when she first got to the U.S. and had surgery. However, as Nancy told her story, these challenges did not seem as though they were as difficult to face as the magnitude of issues surrounding taking care of her aging parents. When I arrived at her home for the first interview, she immediately began telling me about her parents. It was quite evident that she was concerned about their well being and she spoke of the difficult decision to leave them. However, she was constantly in touch with them and appreciated the fact that her brother and sister-in-law lived close by and helped to take care of them in addition to paid help. Nancy narrated other personal transitional challenges as immediate and less as issues she wrestled with over a period of

time. She told the story of how she was overwhelmed by the instantaneous demands of settling into a new place:

The question of adapting at first to many things and besides the orientation course that takes place in three days I had it all in one, so it was like one night I come in, the person who was gonna talk to us about the bank system and then he left then the other person talked to us about the educational system and then he left, and it was like, Oh my gosh, then I am taking the driving license . . . So everything was one thing after the other so it was like very, very tiring and exhausting.

Although the other participants did not have the same family demands as Nancy, they also narrated how they had to find different ways of communicating with family members such as email, Skype and phone. Their family relationships were redefined by the different communication forms that they had to utilize.

When Charity took up the teaching job in the U.S. she also had to relocate her family. This was challenging as her husband had to leave his job as an accountant in Botswana and find another job in the U.S. Additionally, she had to deal with the complexity of finding adequate child care for her child. In Botswana child care was easily accessible and less costly. Therefore adjusting to the new environment was a family affair. She lost weight during the first month when she arrived and tried to settle before her husband and child joined her.

Professional Transitions and Challenges

Professional transitional challenges consisted of navigating the expectations of what it means to be a teacher in the U.S. from both the students and the school. In this regard, international teachers often faced different ways of exercising their teacher authority, their mode of classroom practice, their understanding of local and national

policies, their delivery and knowledge of subject matter content. Professional transitions also included opportunities of professional growth and development and teacher workloads. These professional ideals were mediated by the teacher's values and beliefs about teaching, learning and education. All the participants in the study had several professional challenges that they had to overcome. Many of them were similar. However, others felt more strongly about certain aspects of professional transitions than others.

Subject matter content. Although the subject matter content was not a major transitional challenge, most of the teachers found themselves having to modify what they knew or the subject they were to teach. Rhonda, who had been trained to teach chemistry, was required to teach earth science:

I had never taught earth science either, and so I think my first few months here I was just frantically trying to figure out what I was supposed to be teaching. Coming from chemistry with seniors to teaching earth science to freshmen I was just . . . the other staff was really supportive and the kids were pretty good. I think they knew that I was confused about a lot of things.

Vera's teaching was complicated by the fact that her students frequently consulted her for other subject areas other than her ESL teaching:

I was used to teaching English, like grammar and literature back home. That came pretty easy. What I wasn't used to was teaching Science and History in English. My students come to me with any subject and I help them. I am not a science guru or anything but I read to them and explain to them in a simpler language they can understand. But a biology book—I call it Greek—Ms. Vera, I don't get this. I don't get it either. So teaching in my content area wasn't difficult because it was the same thing as I did back home—grammar and literature, but teaching other subjects, that was a challenge . . . although I knew about the topics . . . but how do you explain them in English, what are the words. . . . I didn't know the words in English. So I can understand my students very well. I can understand the language barrier . . . absolutely.

Explaining the content of other subjects in English to her Hispanic students was a challenge because Vera was not always familiar with the academic discourses of other subjects. However, even for Spanish speaking teachers such as Nancy, teaching Spanish in the U.S. was sometimes problematic because of the variations in the language. Nancy spoke about this complexity:

It was really funny because mainly the Spanish that you find in the textbooks the students use is Spanish from Spain. And that's not the way we speak. So it was really funny but at the same time challenging. Because there are many things you take for granted because it's your own language but you don't know where they come from or probably you were taught about that but you forgot. So it was like, oh, I forgot about this, or, I have never come across these words in my life . . . Being in front of a class it was difficult for me because of teaching English in my country all the time was difficult for me to speak Spanish in front of an English audience. So that was kind of difficult for me and also to paraphrase, sometimes I have to say how can I put it because in general the Spanish I use in my country when I'm with professionals is very correct, let's say, very formal. And so at times when speaking here Spanish I find myself being too formal.

Although Mary and Nancy had Spanish teaching credentials in addition to teaching ESL, their former experience was teaching English in their home countries. Their switch from teaching English to their students back home to teaching Spanish to U.S. students impacted how they viewed themselves as teachers and how they enacted their teacher role.

Teaching style. Rhonda's story revealed how she embraced a teaching style that was different from the one she was used to in New Zealand. According to her, her teaching style had shifted from being "conversational" to being "confrontational." Charity felt that there were some aspects of her teaching style that she could adopt from Botswana such as setting her own classroom rules and taking ownership of her

classroom, while she also had to learn “new” ways of teaching. Respect was directly related to learning a new way of teaching for her. Charity recalled how she also struggled with the disrespect portrayed by her students. A fellow international teacher left after two weeks because of feeling disrespected:

I was frustrated at the beginning. Because you’re coming with a mentality of teaching the way I was teaching back at home. These kids . . . you just expect them to have respect the way, at home they had respect for teachers. But with these ones they just talk back to you the way they want. So she left after two weeks.

Perla perceived teaching in the U.S. as being more geared towards preparing students for the job market and less about content and knowledge. She therefore had to adjust her teaching style to one that incorporated both. Naomi felt that she needed to adjust her teaching from a teacher centered focus to a more student centered focus:

As far as my teaching goes, that really changed because in the past I used to have a very teacher centered class. That was my teaching in the past. Everything was focused on me. There were no group activities, no pairing up of the student, so it was a boring class . . . We did not have the student centered class where everything has to be about the student. The teacher doesn’t just stand and present their lesson. This is how it is here, but at home now, everything was very, very teacher centered, and the classes were shorter and I did not have so much time to have all these different activities with the students. So that’s changed a lot, the way I teach and the way I approach teaching. So this has changed a lot.

Naomi also related changing her teaching style to having to teach in a 90-minute block and hence learned how to engage her students for an extended length of time, which she had not previously been accustomed to. She also had to learn to utilize more technology in her teaching in the U.S.

Vera's adjustment in her teaching style involved learning how to teach in a high school since she had previously taught in a college setting. She related this adjustment to not feeling like a competent teacher but "the worst teacher ever." Her story revealed how teachers' emotions play a role in the way teachers feel about their work and their identity as professionals (van Veen & Slegers, 2006; Zembylas, 2003).

It was hard because I was used to using big words because I was teaching college students, I could use the words from the dictionary without a problem, and I didn't have to explain what chisel is, and I didn't have to explain what linoleum is, like I did today, which takes forever. Of course, college level, you teach much differently you have different expectations for your college students. And coming here and honestly in the first two years to be really honest, I thought I was the worst teacher ever, because my kids didn't get a thing. I still couldn't step down and adjust to their level. It took me some time to realize how they think and what they need in order to understand what I'm talking about.

Vera also related part of her struggle in teaching to the fact that most of her students had not learned their mother tongue. She therefore had to adjust her teaching strategies to encompass language skills:

My biggest problem was . . . even when I was teaching English to Romanians, my students knew how to speak their mother tongue perfectly, read and write because it was their mother tongue. The thing that shocked me here was that these kids could not even speak Spanish. So I did not have to teach them English, but language too. Like, what's a noun, what's an adjective, what's a verb, how to put words together in a sentence.

Gollnick and Chinn (2009) point out that students' "knowledge of their first language plays an important role in the process of acquiring and learning a second language" (p. 216). This fact has been proven by second language acquisition researchers such as Corson (1999), Cummins (1996, 2000), and Garcia (1999). When students develop both

their first language and English as a second language, their linguistic, cognitive, and academic development is enhanced (Cummins, 2000), thus diminishing the academic gaps and language barriers.

Professional development. Some teachers referenced how the experience of teaching in the U.S. had provided them with opportunities to grow professionally while others like Nancy felt that they had become “static” in their growth:

I did have more chances of professional development in my country than here. Here I feel I am growing because of all the technology I have at hand but personally I feel, I grow much more in my country because we have many more workshops and conferences you can go to and attend without having to pay anything or without having to miss a class, so in that sense I feel sometimes feel I’m a bit flat. I ‘m doing things for myself I’m giving speeches and things because I love that. And besides that keeps me researching all the time and trying to be updated with the latest trends in education, but never the less I feel that it’s something I’m kind of static. As regards as what the county can offer me. You know what I mean? It’s different. Obviously in my country it’s something you do if you want to, but I will go to at least 15 workshops and conferences throughout the year at least in my country.

Nancy compared professional development opportunities in her country and viewed the opportunities in the U.S. as less frequent. However, for Charity, Perla, and Rhonda, who had managed to join a graduate program, the collegial relationships they had developed with fellow students and the learning were part of their professional growth. In this regard, teachers had a different view of what professional development meant to them and the access to these opportunities.

Apart from professional development opportunities such as enrolling in graduate school or those scheduled by the school district, some teachers such as Charity and Mary viewed the international experience as a whole as professionally enriching. Charity was

grateful for the hands on experience she had with teaching exceptional students in her classroom, while Mary referenced her professional growth in the use of technology and multiple teaching resources.

Paper work and grading. All the teachers talked about how difficult it was for them to adjust to the paper work and/or grading. Others such as Nancy, initially found it a challenge to use utilize technology and enter grades and attendance into an electronic system. However, the grading load was not a problem because she was used to teaching more students in two different schools in Argentina. While Vera talked about the amount of paper work she had to do, she found her secretarial background helpful. She also related the value of the paper work to the funding of the ESL program:

It's crazy but I love doing paperwork probably because of my secretarial background kicks in you know and I love it. I am not good at keeping up with it but I love doing it . . . I had no idea that being a teacher requires so much paperwork. That can be pretty overwhelming especially because you are accountable for that and if you don't have that paper, it's the end of the world because they won't get federal money for every student, and they have to justify all the money we get from the federal government. So they need the paperwork and the pressure is on us.

In addition to the regular paper work, Charity had to adjust to paperwork related to teaching exceptional students:

I did a lot of paperwork here, there's a lot of paperwork, and you have to account for so many things. Like if you have the special kids in your class, it's a lot of paperwork, back at home we never had that. Then you have to follow the modifications, you don't follow the modifications, it's a big problem.

Nevertheless, Charity viewed learning to work with exceptional students as part of her professional growth. She appreciated the fact that she had not worked with exceptional students before but was now comfortable including them in her classroom.

Situated Transitions and Challenges

The situated challenges and transitions were influenced by the specific school context and local school conditions such as student behavior, leadership and administrative roles and support, collegial relationships and support. Other challenges included language barriers evident in lives of teachers within the school communities outside of schools. Communication channels within the schools also proved to be a challenge to international teachers as they struggled to keep abreast with the ongoing affairs in the schools.

Language barrier. Although Naomi, Mary and Vera had been ESL teachers in their home countries for several years, communication with students in the U.S. and other colleagues proved to be a challenge at times. Charity and Gwenn related that their accents which carried British intonations and British spelling as being a problem at times for their students. For Perla and Nancy, the language complexity was more about being able to understand the kind of English that is spoken in the southeast. Vera shared how the language barrier made her feel like “the worst English speaking person ever.”

I felt like I didn't learn anything in college. I was like . . . What did I do for four years in college? I didn't learn a word. And it's true you know why, in Romania in my college, we mostly learned English through translation. I can tell you about anything in historical terms, but ask me how to call the compass or something. I still use a dictionary . . . When I came here . . . my TV still has English subtitles and I'd take notes, oh, that's the word for that . . . TV helped my vocabulary, too

. . . so as I told you, I understand my students perfectly. I know how it feels not to be able to express how you are feeling or say what you think.

Vera struggled with the fact that the language barrier complicated how she felt about herself as a person and as a professional and that the language barrier impacted her relationships with students and with other colleagues. Her struggle with language helped her empathize with her Hispanic students who experienced similar struggles in school and the community.

Naomi felt that the language barrier caused her to become more bashful than she was. Although she described herself as a shy person, she commented that in the presence of Americans, she became even more reticent and avoided contributing to conversations because she was afraid of making blunders or not being appropriate in her speech:

I'm still shy, and I think I'm even less assertive than I used to be. Because I think it's also because of language issues. For example, when I'm in the group with only Americans, I'm kind of shy to express myself just because I'm afraid I might make mistakes in English. Of course they won't make fun of me, and they won't say anything. But I'm just, you know, I have this fear inside, oh what if I say the word wrong, what if I mispronounce it? What if I don't use the right word? So I think it's also a language issue, because I've always wanted to speak English perfectly and not make any mistakes. So that's why I think I'm shy. When I'm with people who are not native speakers, I'm not that shy, because I know that they can also make mistakes.

Naomi went on to further explain how the pronunciation of words with a different accent caused other English speakers not to understand her:

Well, but still I make mistakes, still I make mistakes and there are words that I pronounce differently than Americans do and then they ask me like five times what I said. Like for example when I call these companies like the Time Warner or Duke Energy or whatever, I have to spell my name like five times until they get

it. Or when I say numbers or something I have to say three times until they get it. So that's why I feel kind of . . . I have to work hard on my language skills.

Culture is embedded in the manner in which people express themselves. In addition to variations of accents, the local language conventions used may not be familiar to people from a different culture. Thus, though international teachers were English language speakers, they had to become familiar with the local mannerisms of speech. The struggles of international teachers in terms of language revealed the complexities involved in speaking a similar language in a different cultural space.

Communication barriers. Most of the teachers commented on the inadequate communication channels in the schools. Vera spoke of how she felt invisible during the first two years of teaching in the U.S:

At first I didn't know what was going on in the school because nobody was telling me anything and I didn't know that here if you don't ask, nobody tells you anything. I didn't know that. So that's the rule I learned here. At home everybody is like, you know what happened there, but here you have to ask. The first two years, I didn't know what was going on in the schools.

Gwenn and Rhonda also recounted the fact that information was not always available to them. They constantly had to ask for it and were not initially aware of the available communication channels. Gwenn commented on how she had to frequently "figure out stuff by herself" when it came to matters such as end of year protocols and procedures.

All the teachers found that sometimes the school had an "acronym language" that they did not understand and colleagues used words such as ADHD, EC and AP whose meanings they did not know. Initially, ESL teachers like Perla, Naomi and Vera also

found it a challenge to understand the ESL way of communicating. Perla commented on the acronyms used in the ESL program and the school as a whole.

You know, and like all the acronyms they use. Not even ESL, the school as a whole, there are so many acronyms for everything. So you have to understand how that works and who you have to go to, every AP or API, they have different responsibilities, or if you need this talk to this, if you need that talk to that. That was really something that you know, to understand.

Communication barriers can lead to feelings of isolation within a school community and it takes a while to learn the cultural expressions and idioms of that community.

Student-teacher relationships. The relationships between teachers and students in relation to behavior and communication in and out of the classroom emerged as a major theme. The way teachers feel about their students influences their professional identities. In fact their sense of “professional identity helps them to position or situate themselves in relation to their students and to make appropriate and effective adjustments in their practice and their beliefs about and engagement with students” (James-Wilson, 2001, as cited in Day, 2002, pp. 684-685). The story of teaching is hence related to the story of negotiating student relationships.

Teachers felt that sometimes students were insolent and impolite as compared to what they were previously used to in their countries. All the participants mentioned how they wrestled with the manner in which students treated each other and spoke to teachers and principals. The fact that the culture of respect among students was generally lacking in the classrooms and in the schools as a whole was disturbing to the international teachers. Many of them also referenced fellow international teachers who had left after

teaching for a short time (ranging from 2 weeks to a year) because they felt disrespected as teachers by the students. On average the teachers mentioned the word “respect” about 15 times each during the two interviews except for Gwenn who did not raise respect as a concern. When I asked Nancy what she valued most as a person and as a teacher her answer was respect. Vera described the issue of respect as a major challenge when she began to teach in the U.S.

Students at first kind of disappointed me. I found them to be kind of rude and disrespectful towards their teachers; too much freedom to do whatever they want and disrespect for their teachers. One of the shocks I got was that, they don't say hello when they get to your room or bye when they leave . . .

She went on to comment on why she felt she could only teach ESL students and not “American” students:

I don't know if I could handle regular kids. We were talking with some other international teachers—again, respect. We don't think the American student respect their teachers enough, or as I would like them to respect me. I don't know if I can handle them. I hear all this crazy stuff about students fighting in the classroom, teachers try to break it up and get hit, that's not why I came here. So I don't think I can . . .

Similarly, Perla, who was an ESL teacher specifically working in a New Comers program, thought that it was advantageous that she did not actually teach “American kids”:

As newcomers, when my kids come, they have just left their countries, they have just started a new high school. They have no idea how things work. So I kind of mold them to what I want. That makes my life easier, because from what I've heard from other teachers it's really hard sometimes. If they have been here for a

long time they are coming from middle schools, you know you have your bad habits and they bring that with them.

There were both negative and positive aspects of transitions related to student relationships and behavior. Charity conveyed the dilemma she felt in relation to respect and behavior as she compared the students in the U.S and those she had previously taught in Botswana. On one hand, she appreciated how U.S. students spoke their minds as compared to students in Botswana who would only speak if they were spoken to by the teacher. However, she did not appreciate it when the communication bordered on disrespect:

The students if I compare them to students in Africa, they are open. The students here are open. They will tell you whatever they want, they don't hold anything back. Compared to Africa, in Africa the students they cannot even talk, if you don't talk to them. If you don't ask they won't. And even if they talk to you they'll do it in a respectful way. But here, some, I'm not going to say all of them, most of them, they're not respectful, they'll tell you their mind.

Although Mary and Gwenn were in the same school, Mary described her relationships with students as "distant." She felt that in Colombia she was able to be more personal with the students, their families and the communities they came from:

In Colombia you get more involved with the students, with their lives, with the families. When you are there, you can hug them, and they hug you, they don't use even your last name, they can call you by your first name. It's like a really close relationship, of course with respect all the time . . . because they know that you're the teacher.

She explained this situation as perhaps an issue of her age and the fact that she had taught a girls' school in Colombia. She spoke of how the American students commented that she "looked young to them."

Nancy was conscious of the cultural difference in the way she related to her students. She realized she could not communicate in the same manner she was used to communicating with her students in Argentina. Culture impacted how her student perceived what she said and she needed to be aware of this:

Today a student came to me and said I didn't come yesterday so I don't know what was done. I say, "Why don't you ask one of your peers." And I want them to be responsible not always to resort to the teacher. I want them to be responsible enough to talk to each other about responsibilities at school. And so I say, she said, Okay. And then it was the beginning of the class so I was expecting the kids at the door so I started asking them in. And then I started thinking well gosh, they don't see each other like in my country every single day all day long. So you see that was a cultural thing. So I went in and said, you know what, with my culture in mind, because in my country that's what students will do, they will never go to a teacher saying what do I have to do. Because they will probably call one of their peers and say hey what did you do today with the Spanish teacher, with the English teacher, with the math teacher, oh you have to do activity three, you have to do this, whatever, and I explained that to this girl in front of home class. I say I'm sorry I really forgot I was in the states so they started laughing, but at the same time I was sharing my culture with them.

Naomi recalled that dealing with students' behavior was her greatest challenge when she began teaching in the U.S.:

And here also when I came the first year was also hard and especially the first semester was a very hard one. Just because I didn't know how to act, how to behave with these students and what to do, what were the steps if somebody said this or did this. So definitely my worst experiences were when it came to behavior issues.

Rhonda described her relationship with her students as one that created a dichotomy between being a teacher and a friend. She commented that during the previous week she had been invited to speak to new international teachers and she felt like what she was telling them was to be more of a “drill sergeant than a teacher.” Rhonda’s perception of who a teacher is was challenged by the fact that she had to constantly monitor the students’ work or else they would not stay on task. She did not view this as part of who she was as a teacher or a teacher’s role. A teacher was a professional who guided the students to learn not one who had to *make* the students learn. She struggled with negotiating her relationships with students because there was a discrepancy between who she was and what she did. Being a teacher did not mean policing students. The meaning she had previously attached to being a teacher was challenged:

There’s no room here to be a friend as well as a teacher. It seems like you have to constantly say to the kids, I’m not your friend I’m your teacher. That needs to be more clearly spelled out to them. They get confused if you start treating them like a . . . not like a friend, but if you start being familiar with them, talking about anything that’s not directly related to the work, they just go off task and don’t settled down to work. So you are much more an authoritarian in the classroom and it’s your job to constantly keep them on task . . . I’m not the teacher I was in New Zealand here. The kids would do no work, they would just want to sit and talk to you about whatever’s going on, outside in the world. There isn’t much room for that.

Vera narrated a similar experience in relation to being required to enforce dress code in her school:

We were fashion police last year . . . chasing students down the hall literally, “Take your hoodie off.” I don’t wanna do it. I don’t wanna be a fashion police, I want to teach. This year they let the students wear the hoodies and it was fine, we didn’t have to chase them down the hallway. I can really focus on teaching this

year. So I think it has a great impact on the school atmosphere and life and everything.

Vera felt that asking her to be a “fashion police” interfered with her being a teacher.

When the school got a new principal who did not enforce the rule of “no hoodies” she was glad that she could concentrate on teaching and less on what the students wore.

Vera also related her relationships with her students to her personality. She sometimes felt that who she was as a person (for instance her lack of patience) got in the way of building more positive relationships that could lead to better performance. She spoke of how she was learning to be “patient, consistent and organized,” as attributes she ascribed to being a good teacher.

. . . sometimes I say things that you normally don’t say to a student, like “oh, don’t do this, let’s move on” instead of helping them and stopping and helping them and showing them. With patience you can do pretty much everything that you need or you want to. But sometimes I don’t have enough patience and I’m like, okay, let’s move on. I don’t like to explain to them, because I’m like, Oh, God, how can you not get this? It’s so obvious . . . but I’m working on my patience and I’m surprised speaking of becoming a better teacher, I was known for my lack of patience. But I realized that I don’t do anybody any good if I don’t change. My students will get angry and nervous and they will not ask me anything because they know I would get angry and I would feel bad because I could not help them.

Maintaining healthy boundaries between the teacher and the student was sometimes complex. The idea of having explicit rules and regulations for students was new to Nancy. Previously she was accustomed to handling student behavior expectations in a “common sense, common knowledge” manner. But in the U.S. she was required to spell out her class rules and reference them when handling discipline. This altered her

student-teacher relationships in some way. In a different sense, Vera also struggled with maintaining healthy boundaries with her students when she gave them an opportunity to share their personal problems:

One thing I had an issue with, was I was trying to be their friend instead of their teacher, and they could do anything in my classroom because we could talk about anything and everything. Whatever question they had they asked. They knew they could come to me and they could talk about it. So I struggled with it for two years at least, trying to show them I am the teacher and you are the student, we can be friends but there are some limits, so establishing those boundaries was a challenge for me in class room management.

In viewing herself as an advocate and confidant to Hispanic students, her relationship with the students was sometimes jeopardized by their inability to understand their positions as students and her as a teacher. She then needed to learn to negotiate her identity and role as a teacher in a manner that created healthy relationships yet maintained boundaries.

Student motivation. Charity, Gwenn, Perla, and Vera narrated the struggles they encountered as they made an effort to motivate their students. The teachers learned they were not only teachers of content but embraced the added task of inculcating the value of education to students. Charity compared her experience of motivating students to work hard between the two different contexts she had taught:

One thing I've realized with these kids. You have to push them, you have to motivate them, it's like it's for your own, some of them they think when they're doing the work they are doing you a favor. It's like they're doing you a favor when they're doing that work. So that's one thing. They are not motivated. Most of them are not motivated, they don't know the importance of education. Others will tell you I'm here because my mom makes me come to school, I don't want to be in school. So the interest level of the students here is not that good.

Gwenn narrated her story of student motivation on a different tone. She took it upon herself to instill a sense of belief and agency in the students. She saw this as a role she had to adjust to in the U.S. and not as much in the UK. Gwenn shared a significant teaching story about how she encouraged one of her students to graduate:

A lot of kids don't think that they can achieve and they are told at home they can't do it . . . you know, they are told that they can't graduate. I had one kid . . . I told her two years ago, she graduated last year. And when I told her she was really having a hard time and we would often sit and chat. Nobody in her family had graduated, her parents didn't see the point of her graduating . . . "Why do you want to graduate, why do you want to go to college, you can just stay . . . you know, get a little job, get unemployment like we do" and she was like, she really wanted to graduate, she was like "no one is gonna be there for me." I said I will be there. I'll be there, what are you talking about. And then last year you know I had the break down and everything last year and that time she came to me just before graduation. She said Ms. Gwenn. I have a really important question to ask you. I said what's that? She said, you are gonna be there are you? You said you are gonna be there. I said Sue of course I will be there, I will be there. I said, I told you I'd be there.

Gwenn narrated her story of motivating her student using several voices—her own, her student's and the student's family. She envisioned herself not just as a teacher, but as a nurturer who needed to support her students to graduate. Teachers' sense of professional and personal identity is a key variable in their job fulfillment and commitment (Day, 2002). Gwenn found part of her sense of fulfillment as a teacher through the out of classroom interactions such as the one she described above. Teacher's own needs for competency are related to their sense of self as teachers. For Gwenn this need was partially met by being able to see a student who might have dropped out of school graduate.

Vera's concern for the well being of Hispanic students was reflected in how she motivated them to maintain attendance and eventually graduate. She expressed the emotional moment of watching her students attain a high school diploma:

Here, I am proud of them when they come to school every day. So many of my students have dropped out, and a high school group of teachers, we really campaign for our students to stay in school. So I'm proud that some students that I started with when I came here, graduated last year, and I cried like I was their mom or even worse when I saw them on stage with a diploma because I knew how hard they worked and how hard it was for them. They had to take Biology in English. I cannot read a biology book, it's horrible. They passed biology. I was so proud of them. One of them last year made almost a level 4 in history! When they come to school and they want to learn, despite all the challenges—it's a miracle every day.

School structure. All participants except Gwenn made the claim they struggled at first to adjust to structures such as block schedules and curriculum sequencing. Charity described how she wrestled with the difference:

The structure is different, you know back at home you the way you can have Math, English the whole year, here they do it like the way we have it in college. The semester itself . . . you choose whatever you have to do within the four years you are in school; as long as you do it they don't care how you do it. It is not structured the way ours you have to do it systematically. It's not structure like that. With them it is. I found it difficult . . . OK I don't like it for high school. I like what they do in middle school. In middle school it's a little bit like ours . . . like now you see someone doing geometry and then going back to algebra it does not seem to flow easily. Like now you can be in 12th grade but you've done different things, not the same . . . it was a little bit confusing for me and also the way they compress content within a semester, instead of through you out the year, building it up from one year to another year . . . like that. That one was a bit difficult.

Nancy thought that teaching this way made it more difficult to build a classroom culture due the different age groups when the classes consisted of both freshmen and seniors:

First of all the students begin in kindergarten or when they are three years old. And they will graduate all together, that means you begin when you are three with a group of other kids and you graduate with the same group from high school. Which in a way I think is really good because as teachers we are dealing with kids who have common interests because it's not the same interest of a student who is a freshman than that of a senior. So for us I believe that's much better in that sense because you are dealing with kids who are the same age. And chronologically speaking and when it comes to maturity as well, you might find slight differences you know, but all in all that's the way it is.

Workloads. The manner in which the teachers responded to the workload was mainly viewed through their previous experiences. For Perla, schools in Brazil operated in three shifts—morning, afternoon and evening school. She was therefore used to a busy schedule where she had two mornings and evenings off. The rest of the week she worked the three shifts. Thus, teaching to a 7:30 am to 2:30 pm schedule was an adjustment and she felt she was “wasting time” and “not doing anything.”

I'm not doing anything, what am I gonna do after 2:30? Well, I can go to the gym . . . I started trying to think about all these fun things. But still, I was really uncomfortable for a long time. I was like, why am I feeling guilty that now I have quality life. So that was like a challenge for me, like, you know, deep inside I was like, should I? Shouldn't I?

Similarly, Nancy was previously used to working long hours and teaching large numbers of students in her classes. She consequently thought that teaching in the U.S. helped her to be more organized since she had more time to plan and had fewer classes:

Actually because I have almost no time in my country for many things, I feel that I'm much more organized here in the sense that, what might take longer for American teachers, for me it takes less time because I'm used to working in so many schools, so many groups that I know how to organize my time in that sense. Sometimes I feel that teachers here kind of get overwhelmed with all the things they have to do. And the only thing that overwhelms me is technology because besides that, you know.

Mary was used to working with 8 classes of 50 girls each. Therefore her work load was not necessarily overwhelming in terms of class size. However Rhonda found it difficult to deal with a class of 35.

Collegial relationships. The relationships that the international teachers had with other colleagues were varied and narrated within a broad spectrum of positive to negative experiences. Positive collegial relationships contribute to the international teachers experiencing a sense of belonging in the professional community. Vera valued the idea of working with other colleagues in the U.S. which was something she had missed in Romania:

The way teachers communicate and work together, we didn't have that back home. Everybody was on their own . . . So this kind of communion I was longing for back home, I found it here. It wasn't a challenge but that stood out for me.

Gwenn however narrated how she had to initiate a collaborative working environment because teachers seemed work as "individuals" in her department:

In [school] it was very friendly . . . very, very friendly. There was lots of support in a friendly way, but I had to ask for the support. The support was there, but I had to ask for it. This sort of drives me mad, because I think the support should be offered. You know? And if it wasn't for the fact that I'm a quite forward person and I don't mind asking for it.

Gwenn talked in depth about the lack of collaboration as a whole and how she had tried to change the culture of individuality in her department. She felt strongly that the new teachers who joined her department did not have to go through what she went through.

Rhonda wished that she had more “down time” to associate with other teachers. She was used to “a staff room with a coffee maker and couches and an hour for lunch to just sit around and talk.” She missed building relationships with other teachers during coffee and lunch time breaks. Although she indicated in her story that the staff was welcoming and friendly, the school structure did not provide enough time to build meaningful relationships with other teachers.

Naomi felt that her position as an ESL teacher impacted her relationships with her colleagues. She described her relationships as “very professional and very school oriented” and not “so personal.” In Romania, Naomi had experienced more personal professional relationships than what she experienced in the U.S. She made the claim that “here everything is about school.” Though her story conveyed the fact that the teachers were helpful, she thought that they could have done better when it came to responding to the needs of the ESL students:

Whenever I ask for help, they help me, they send me materials or they make copies for me. It's an excellent relationship. I don't have anyone in the school that I wouldn't get along with that wouldn't help me or that would hate me or something, no. We actually get along very well. The only issue that I have, it wasn't such a big issue, but still, as ESL teachers we have to send out some forms throughout the semester about our kids, just to check on them, how they are doing in their classes. And it always takes longer for some teachers to complete those forms. And I'm sure it's not because they want to do it later, they want to be late, and they don't do it on purpose. It's because they are busy or they don't check their emails on time. Or because they think ESL is not so important, but this is an issue that I have with some teachers.

Vera described a similar situation in relationships with other teachers. Her position as an ESL teacher created different dynamics with other teachers when she requested reports for her students:

Some teachers see me as a source of evil, not evil, but more work for them. Because it's my job to be the eyes of my students and I need to ask other teachers for progress reports, behavior issues, that's part of my job. And they see it as more work for them. So they don't really like that.

Although Perla also taught ESL students in a Newcomer program, her story of collegial relationships was more about her struggle to connect relationally with other teachers and ask for help when needed and less about her relationships being impacted by her position as an ESL teacher:

Well I worked for two years in a school and there were still people that I never talked to. You know people have their own groups or they have their own worlds. And they just, . . . they're not out there, if you go and ask for help they will help you. But nobody is gonna be knocking at your door and offering help. If they see you struggling, nobody is gonna offer, you have to ask. That's what I learned, in the U.S., you have to ask, it's not only school. I just feel like you have to ask for help. And but they help, if you ask they're gonna be there for you.

Although Nancy was comfortable about the current nature of her relationships in the school, she narrated an incident that was not so positive. She felt that there were times when "people looked down" on her, especially when she first arrived:

I experienced that [looking down on her] when I was at the other school. I was at the teachers' lounge and there were these teachers talking about literature and all, and they came up with an epic poem that I read when I was at teacher training college and I started talking about it and what I felt about it. And one of the teachers there who has always looked down on me, he looked at me and he said, "You read that?" And I said, "Yeah I read it in the first year of the teacher training

college.” And he said, “What else did you read?” “Well, I read lots of English writers, lots of American writers” and I started tell him who I read and learned. When I said, Shakespeare I think his eyes were like out of their orbits. I mean, it’s like, again, they probably thought I was there because I was a native speaker [of Spanish], not because I was prepared to be there. And I have a feeling that at times that’s how it goes, many people might think that.

Nancy found it unprofessional for some teachers to think that she was hired not because she was a qualified teacher but because she was from a Spanish speaking country. She initially had to convey to some teachers that was “qualified to be here” when she first arrived.

Charity also expressed mixed feelings about the quality of collegial relationships:

Some of them are good [relationships]. Of course in a place you find some are not. You’ll find others are good some are not. And the good thing with me, the Jamaican teacher who was my local advisor is also teaching the same area with me. So I was so lucky, we are in the same department. So she’ll tell me this one is like that. And there are others, you walk in a room, you say hi, they ignore you. I’ve had a couple of them, and she’ll tell me, Oh that one I told you, is racist, don’t bother with them.

She previously indicated the positive relationships she had with members of her department and how they were a continual support to her. However, when it came to relating with other teachers outside of her department, it was difficult to build relationships.

Parent-teacher relationships. The relationships that international teachers developed with parents were varied. Rhonda did not feel as though the parents supported her when it came to discussing student behavior and performance. She referenced how 90% of the time she did not hear back from the parents when she sent progress reports

home, wrote an email or left a phone message. She also noted that there were a few parents “who you do hear back from but don’t seem to know what to do about it. Their input had no effect on the student’s behavior or the student’s grade.” There were also a few parents whose input had an effect—these parents communicated with her, came for conferences and showed an interest in their children’s performance. However, such parents were only one or two per class. She also spoke of the frustration of waiting for parents to show up for four hours and only three turned up. She spoke of the professionalism of parent-teacher relationships in New Zealand:

Back home we’d have parent conferences and you’d have a signup sheet for weeks leading up to it, the kids would come in and fill out an appointment time for parents and transfer it onto their sheet. Parents would turn up at their assigned time to see me, like with a doctor’s appointment or some other professional. So it’s not like that, we just sit there for four hours waiting on parents who we don’t know if they are going to show up and most of the time they don’t.

These experiences contributed to Rhonda not feeling like a professional and demoralized about teaching. Contrary to Rhonda’s experience, Vera sometimes felt that the parents had too much power over the decision making process concerning matters such as student grades:

In some schools really the parents run the school. . . . which would never be the case back home. . . whatever the teacher says it goes. If the teacher says you need to work more, here the parents come and argue with you because the grade you gave Jonny was too low. How dare you, so that was kind of a shock.

Vera’s story also conveyed the feeling that teachers’ professionalism was questioned by parents:

Because the kid doesn't do the homework, doesn't pay attention, doesn't take notes, and then he [parent] comes to the principal and say, "Oh, it's the teacher's fault because he didn't call me when he was failing." Really, really? But you as a parent don't you want to know what's happening with your kid? Why don't you call? I have 35 kids to call, you have only 2 kids. You do the math.

Interestingly, Naomi shared a similar experience while teaching in Romania. However she felt that in the U.S., the principals she worked with were supportive of the decisions she made and therefore a parent would not ask her to do anything she considered unethical such as change a grade.

I worked in a very high class school. And we had some students whose parents were very important in our town. And they gave money to the school. Like they would sponsor events in the schools or they'd just give money to the schools to buy different supplies. And I had some of those students in my class, whose parents were so rich and affluent and blah blah. And once I guess I didn't give the right grade or something or marks or my grade was too low for a student or something. So I had a talk with the principal because of that. So that was something that I didn't like and that was another reason that kind of pushed me to go to another country. And try something new. While here in the US they're all [principals] very, very professional.

For Perla, developing a relationship with parents was complicated by the socio-economic situations the parents lived through in addition to the language barrier. Her story of relationships with her parents who were ESL parents focused on the difficulty in accessing them and the inability to find a space and place for dialogue. Their work schedules and their inability to visit the school for parent-teacher conferences hindered Perla from building quality relationships with them. Even for those who could sometimes manage to come to school she found difficult to engage in school activities because they were "ashamed" of their lack of English speaking skills:

Some of them work the whole day[parents]. Some of them leave at 4am and they come back at midnight or 10pm. They don't have time for their kids. They just don't. And they are . . . they are just like, go to school I have to go to work. So whenever you call if you want to see them it's really hard, so most of the conferences are over the phone because they don't have time. They have to work. They have big families. Some of them have 5- 8 kids. So if you call it's just a waste of time. "Can you come in?" "Oh no, I can't." Or sometimes . . . "Oh I don't have money for the gas and I have to pay my neighbor to drive me."

The experience of dealing with ESL parents was difficult for Perla. She expressed the shock of learning about the lives of the parents—"You see people who really work hard, who try to make a living . . . and it's sad." She was stunned at how hard they worked and yet still faced daunting economic struggles in the U.S.

Although Vera was also an ESL teacher, her stories of relationships with parents were more generally about dealing with parents in U.S. schools and less about ESL parents. However, she referenced that fact that because she could speak Spanish, she was able to communicate with them better. She did not experience the same language barrier that Perla experienced. In fact her story of dealing with ESL parents was shared in light of reflecting on her invisibility in the school and how she was frequently called upon to speak with Hispanic parents. This made her feel less invisible.

Mary narrated her story of relationships with parents in reference to the forms of communication—website, email and phone. She commented that she did not know a lot of her parents and only saw them two or three times in a year. Her relationships with parents were layered with a lack of personal interaction and becoming accustomed to communicating through media and less face-to-face interactions.

Transitional Resources

Each teacher accessed a variety of transitional resources. These included principals and assistant principals, fellow international teachers, family and friends. Some had unique circumstances like Vera, who's greatest support was her land lady. Gwenn also had a unique way of accessing her transitional resources. Her outgoing personality contributed to her being able to ask for what she needed. Table 4 shows the transitional resources that each teacher utilized in their transition.

Table 4. *Transitional Resources*

Participant	Transitional Resources
Charity	Family, personal and professional relationships, administrative support, recruiting agency
Gwenn	Personal initiative, Personal and professional relationships, teacher agency
Nancy	Personal and professional relationships, cultural mediation, teacher agency
Naomi	Personal and professional relationships
Mary	Personal and professional relationships, administrative support, teacher agency
Perla	Family, personal and professional relationships, teacher agency
Rhonda	Personal relationships, teacher agency
Vera	Personal and professional relationships, teacher agency

Recruiting Agency

The support provided by the recruiting agency was viewed by the international teachers with mixed feelings, although all eight teachers were hired through the same agency. Gwenn had misgivings about the level of support that the agency offered:

The agency doesn't really provide anything. . . . when we first came we had a local advisor, our local advisor was on holiday when we first arrived. So we had another girl called. . . she took us all of us teachers who were going to teach at [school name], which was four of us, she took us under her wing and she was great.

She later commented about the orientation program the recruiting agency offered:

. . . We had a week with the agency where we went through like courses and things, which was in my mind really not that useful. Having done a week in Washington DC with Fulbright, and those courses being a lot more useful and better they had been things like cultural differences, and information that you need for the classroom. The agency ones were really pathetic. We spent most of the time lying around a swimming pool. Now the things that were good with the agency . . . they gave us a driving test. We all had to go out in the car and drive, and we all had to pass an agency driving test . . . it was a nice week but in my mind it was a bit of a waste. But that was only because I had previous knowledge of what it could have been like.

Gwenn compared her orientation experience with the one she had had as a Fulbright scholar and described the experience as “pathetic.” However, while most of the other teachers struggled with the issue of the driving test, she thought of it as a positive undertaking on the part of the recruiting agency. Although this was the case, her perspective was indicative of the fact that she had driven before in the U.S. while she taught in the midwest. Subsequently she did not experience the uncertainty of taking the driving test.

Mary thought that the recruiting agency was of assistance because of the access it offered her to a local advisor:

The agency assigns you a local advisor, so you have a local advisor all the time with you. And that person will help you to get apartment, to get a car, to go to buy your cell phone, your clothes, and your food, to show you all the places where you can find anything. So that local advisor is the best. My local advisor was from South Africa, and he was great. And now he's in China, but even now I have contact with him. He was an excellent person. And he helped me a lot with all the transition. He was a great support.

Although the recruiting agency matched each incoming international teacher with an older one who was referred to as a local advisor, the impact of that teacher as a transitional resource was only narrated by Mary and Charity while Gwenn shared that her local advisor was away when she first arrived. There did not seem to be adequate interaction with the international teachers and the local advisors.

Mary found the recruiting agency helpful while she was applying to a master's program and also felt that they were an organization that she could access any time she had a need:

The agency is with us all the time. If we have a problem when I wanted to get my Visas to go to Spain or to go to England, they show me how to do it. Now that I'm applying for my masters program, they are helping me with all the documents and all the requirements that I need to fill in. So the agency is with you all the time, you're not alone.

Although Naomi thought that the agency clarified on certain expectations about teaching in the U.S., she narrated their inadequacy in being more explicit about aspects of teaching such as the block schedules and impact of test scores on teachers' jobs:

I think the agency did a good job of telling us what to expect. I definitely can say that. They sent us a bunch of emails telling us about the cost of living, about all the expenses that we'd have here, about the salaries, telling us about the taxes that we'd have to pay, about the IRS and everything so they did a good job with that. What I would have liked to know more was about educational system. They didn't tell us so much about it. They said of course that the educational system is completely different from what you have at home but then they kind of let us do it on our own. They said oh you can look it up on state's public school system web site. I would have liked a sheet where with bullet points they could have put like some things you need to know before coming here. Like for example you need to know that the class period is 90 minutes. Or for one semester you only have three periods and you see those students every single day for the whole semester for 90 minutes. Or I would have liked them to tell us that your job might depend on the test scores or something. Something just to give us a heads up of what's going to happen. Just to keep us a little bit prepared of what's going to come.

The stories of the international teachers thus revealed a mixed perspective concerning the role of the recruiting agency in helping the teachers' transition to the U.S. in terms of logistical and professional transitions.

Personal and Professional Relationships

Personal relationships played a crucial role in helping international teachers cope with the transitions. Families and significant others were helpful in transitioning into teaching in the new place. Frequently the personal and the professional were intertwined. For instance Ronda felt that if it was not the support of her husband and his family, she would not have been able to make it in school. Charity also credited the support of her husband and mother for her adjustment and ability to continue with her master's program and excel while she was expecting their second child. Nancy referenced her fellow international teachers with whom she would meet and share struggles.

Although Charity initially expressed mixed feelings towards the quality of relationships in general in her school, she found colleagues in her department as one of her most meaningful transitional resources:

. . . and my colleagues, the ones in my department they were so good. They allowed me to sit in their class to see how they deal with everything. And during that year, I didn't have my own room, so I was moving from room to room, when you're having a planning period I'm going to use your room, then the next one somebody has a planning period I use their room, like that. So that really helped because there will always be teachers there doing their own planning while I'm teaching. So they would tell me, this one next time, do it like this. So it really helped me. In my department they were really helpful and they kept on telling me, even with us the first year it wasn't easy. It gets easier as you continue. And it really did.

She also credited the support of her Jamaican colleague who was in the same department:

And also our school they have a mentoring program. If you're new they just put you with someone to help you with everything. So I was also put with that Jamaican to help me with all the process. And it's something they're paid to do. If you're a mentor you're paid to help the new teachers, so that one also helped me.

Sometimes new international teachers were a support to one another in addition to older international teachers socializing incoming ones into the new environment. All the teachers spoke of the support they got from other international teachers. Mary also recounted how the help of another international teacher helped her in her transition. During the orientation, she met an international teacher from Colombia who became her housemate. He was a great help to her because "he had the experience of living in another country." The relationships that Gwenn had developed in the midwest were a transitional

resource when she moved to the southeast. Some of the teachers came and helped her to settle in her apartment and arrange her classroom before the school year began.

Principal and Administrative Support

While most of the international teachers felt supported at different levels by the administration, the international teachers viewed administrative support through varied lens. Vera's initial response to her relationship with the administration was:

They're scared of them, [international teachers] they don't know what to do with them. Really, they're scared of them. At least my former principal, my last two years, was. My former principal the last two years, he just knew I was from Romania . . . just, "Gee, you're from Romania, whew . . ."

During the second interview, Vera also spoke of how her relationship with the administration in relation to her being an ESL teacher contributed to her invisibility. She commented: "I think at least at high school level administration wasn't very open to ESL or didn't know how to deal with not only me, but my students also." During the 2010-2011 academic year, a new principal was hired and Vera seemed to appreciate her capacity to engage her as an ESL teacher:

We have a new principal this year, she is awesome. She's the first principal out of the four or five that I worked with so far, that called me in her office and sat down with me and said what can I do to help the ESL program? And I was like, Wait, What? I was very impressed with her. I didn't expect that, I wasn't used to that. So when she came to me, I didn't go to her, because I was like, oh, she's another principal who doesn't care, but she came to me and asked me what can I do to help you?

Vera further commented on how she felt about being observed in class as it was a "shock" to her since nobody came to her classroom to see how she taught or what she did

while she was teaching in Romania. Charity, too, had to adjust to the issue of being observed and evaluated often, including the principal “spot checks” and the 90-minute observations:

Okay this is another thing which I found difficult . . . its different . . . with them they observe, . . . they observe the teachers. It’s not like at home or rather Botswana, they used to observe only towards the end of the year because getting an increment was dependent on that . . . how they rated you. So they only observed us towards the end of the year. But here it’s like you have to have at least two observations per semester and you can have . . . like now they have introduced at least five, like the principals and the assistant principals they can walk in any time at least even for five minutes . . . they spot check.

Rhonda related the administrative role to managerial duties such as helping teachers with disciplinary problems:

I guess if they’re having trouble managing the classes or if they’ve got a complaint about something or if they need to have an absence and they need it to be recorded. Or just passing in the hallway, that kind of thing, I don’t have a lot to do with them, I don’t feel like I do.

She compared this role with her perspectives of the role of the principal in New Zealand.

The stories she told of her perceptions of the role of a principal in New Zealand reflected their taking more of a leadership role, in terms of “running the school” and leaving “discipline matters to the assistants.”

Naomi related the level of administrative support to her ability to manage her classroom:

As far as I’m concerned how I handle class management . . . I think it also depends on the help that you get from your administration. Because back home I didn’t have that help. And not just me, all teachers don’t have the help from the

administration. So in a class in Romania if a student doesn't want to do work and you cannot control that student you cannot send him out, or the principal cannot help you. The principal will tell you, Oh, he's your student, you deal with it. My job is to administer the school, not your student. While here it's totally different. If you have an issue with the student if you cannot manage your class you can send him down to the control room and then consequences will take place. So I feel like now my classroom management is much better than at home because as I said I have this help of the administration. And also so I think yes I can handle this more because of the administration, but the second thing is also because I have more experience now.

Mary had a more personal relationship with her principal and assistant principals and referenced them as a major support as she transitioned to teach in the U.S.:

The support in my school is great. My principal I can say is one of the best principals I've ever seen. Her support is great, and it's every day. I have three people in my school that have helped me a lot. The first one was my principal of course, the second one was one of the assistant principals. He's not in the school anymore [assistant principal]. But he was like my father here, he was like my American father here, he was all the time, and my first year of course was hard, so he was like there. And support was great.

The stories of the international teachers concerning administrative support and relationships reflected the different school cultures and how the principals viewed their role and the international teachers' expectations of that role.

Personal and Professional Development

All the teachers reflected on the opportunities for personal and professional development as a transitional resource. Naomi, Perla, and Rhonda had enrolled in a master's program. The programs were specifically designed for international teachers by some universities that partnered with the recruiting agency. These programs were optional. Some like Nancy had the intention to enroll but was constrained by the cost.

However they did not view the master's program as a transitional resource in the same way. Naomi explained how she utilized what she learned in the master's program as a resource as she learned different skill sets to enable her manage her classroom:

Being in the master's program in curriculum and instruction we learned some strategies of how to deal with destructive behavior. And what I noticed also, because I had an issue recently with my one of my class. It's not that they were mean or disrespectful, they were just talking excessively, talking and laughing and giggling . . . immature behavior that kind of annoyed me. So of course I sent some students out and they had referrals and they didn't care so much. I stayed with them after school, and I talked to their parents it didn't work that much. But what I noticed now that works. I made a list of all their names and I put it on the wall and I told them whenever you disrupt someone or disrupt the teacher when she's teaching, or you do something that is inappropriate, 10 points off will be taken from your next important grade.

Rhonda found the master's program serving as an avenue to share ideas with other international teachers and less about being equipping to teach in the new setting. She considered what they learned in the master's program as not related to "the real world of teaching."

The highlight of the [international] experience has probably been doing my master's degree, . . . you can sign up for these summer school Masters courses. And meeting with other international teachers and talking about their experiences and commiserating with each other about it and laughing about other things. Yeah, it just seems though, that what you learn in a master's program about education is not really the real world of the teaching scenario that I face every day. Although it's nice to sit in class and talk about education as something that is valued. It doesn't really ring true for me in the classroom.

Teacher Agency

A recurring theme that emerged as teachers narrated about transitions and challenges was how they used their own sense of agency to help them transition into the

new teaching context. Concerning overcoming communication challenges, Vera remarked:

Things have changed because *I* have changed and I know how to play the game now, the hidden rules. Nobody tells you about these rules; they expect you to figure them out by yourself and nobody tells you anything and if you don't know them you don't get to play. So now, after four years, I kind of got them and I know the game and I have friends at school now, we come and visit, we got to lunch together, we text and email, we are really friends. And that's what I wanted from the very beginning.

Gwenn was especially concerned about student motivation and the discrepancies that existed in policies such as 70% being a pass mark for all students which she perceived as a demotivating factor for low performing students who view such as goals as unattainable. She then introduced "individual targets" for her students which was a system she used in the UK. She found the system of encouraging every student to meet their own individual goals a better way to motivate them as compared to overall pass of 70% for everyone. Subsequently she joined the Assessment for Learning team in her school to work towards equipping students with personal goals and not just the school or district pass marks as goals.

In order to overcome transitional challenges such as loneliness teachers took the initiative to find different ways of spending their time after school. Perla began to teach English to immigrant adults two days a week in a nearby church in her community. Gwenn and Mary were members of online groups that did different activities such as dancing or mountain climbing they found at www.meetup.com. The teachers found ways of getting involved with the larger community including after school activities. This

helped them find a sense of belonging as they adjusted to teaching and living in a different country.

Summary

In this fourth chapter, I have discussed transitional experiences of the international teachers and the challenges they faced. Each of these teachers is a unique individual who had a different story of how she decided to become an international teacher. They faced certain challenges that were personal, professional and contextual within the school and the community they lived in. However, they were able to access some transitional resources that helped them navigate the new context. The personal, professional and situated challenges impacted their identities in some way. They had to leave what they had previously known and become accustomed to and learn new ways of being and belonging. Often times, they used their previous personal and professional experiences to mediate the challenges. In the next chapter I discuss the meaning that can be drawn from this data and its significance to educational leadership and teaching in international contexts.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In chapter 4, I presented the findings of my inquiry on the transitional identities of eight international teachers. I began this research with the goal of examining the relationship between teacher identity and the transitional processes of international teachers through their narratives. I was guided by the following questions:

- How do international teachers negotiate their identities as they transition from teaching in their countries of origin to teaching in U.S. high schools?
- What experiences impact personal, professional and situated dimensions of international teachers' identities within the context of teaching in the U.S.?

In this final chapter, I discuss the salient discoveries from this research and explore how the findings of this study can contribute to the research community and to educational policy reform contexts concerning international teacher recruitment in the U.S.

As mentioned in the first chapter, in this study I used the term *international teacher* in a non-essentialist sense, to refer to teachers who have been trained in their home countries and come to work in the U.S. for a period. These teachers acquire J-1 visas in order to gain access to teaching in the U.S. They do not have fixed aspects that define who they are in an international sense. This study revealed that the identity of an international teacher is not a fixed entity, but one that can be negotiated within different

teaching and living contexts. The previous lives and experiences of the participants were varied and unique. International teachers come from both developed and developing countries. The teachers who were part of this study defined their “internationalness” through their own unique manner and the meanings they drew out of their prior to arrival and ongoing experiences in the U.S.

There were several significant findings about how the international teachers in this study negotiated their transitional identities. These include the interactive relationship between teacher identity and transition and the accessibility of transitional resources.

Relationship between Teacher Identity and Transition

In the first chapter, I referenced Nicholson’s (1984) view of transition adjustments which he categorizes as *replication*, *absorption*, *determination* and *exploration*. The data revealed that none of the eight international teachers experienced replication transitions. Professionals who undergo a replication transition face minimum adjustment and can perform relatively the same way as their former work context. The stories of each international teacher evidenced that none of them were able to act and teach in a similar manner as in their previous teaching experiences. This finding is in line with previous conceptions of identity (Sarup, 1996; Wenger, 1998) (including teacher identity) that it is dynamic, fluid and mediated through social contexts (Drake et al., 2001; Spillane, 2000). Additionally, international assignments offer an avenue for professionals to reflect on how their identity has been transformed and thus impact their future career choices (Kohonen, 2008).

When professionals face absorption transitions, they make identity adjustments with little role modification. The assigned role is fixed while the person's identity has to shift to fit into the new role. Determination transition individuals alter the new role to their identity and "actively determine[s] elements in the content or structure of the role" and leave a "stamp of their identity and unique skills upon the role and its surrounding milieu" (Nicholson, 1984, p. 176). In Nicholson's view, professionals in senior management who are hired because of their unique expertise would mainly experience determination transition. Exploration transition individuals engage in the simultaneous change of their identity and the role. They have the freedom to be innovative in their job description and experiment with processes that benefit the organization as a whole and also negotiate their own identity to fit the organizational needs and their own expertise. None of the teachers' stories seemed to reveal an exploration transition. Their stories seemed to depict a high level of absorption transition and some level of determination transition. International teachers often had to make identity adjustments with little role adjustments. The role of who a teacher is in the U.S. was already assigned through the existing professional community (Britzman, 2003). However, although this was the case, sometimes they were able to adjust their role (what a teacher does) to suit their identity (who a teacher is). Determination transition individuals alter their new role (what they do) to their identity (who they are). The data thus revealed that the international teachers seemed to experience an absorption-determination transition. However, the levels of absorption and/or determination were varied. Because this is a narrative study, the weight

of such levels cannot be determined without a quantitative transition scale with specific variables.

International Teachers' Identity Negotiation

The findings of this study revealed that identity negotiation requires transitional resources that serve as tools for international teachers to mediate their previous knowledge and experiences of living and teaching within the new context. However, these transitional tools are not always a “given.” Access to transitional tools was dependent upon the context, the individual’s ability to draw upon them and the teacher’s sense of agency.

Personal experiences included biographical and other life experiences. Professional experiences included their previous teaching experiences, professional growth and development. The meaning they attached to the experiences played a role in how the teachers negotiated who they were as individuals and as teachers in the U.S. Additionally, how the international teachers managed the tensions within the personal, professional and situated dimensions of their identity in transition determined their sense of efficacy and commitment to their work (Day & Kington, 2008).

For example, Charity, who had lived in Botswana for 6 years where the renewal of her contract was dependent upon performance, was able to take the accountability aspect of her teacher identity in the U.S. more positively. Although she felt the pressure of the high level of accountability in the U.S., she was familiar with the relationship between who a teacher is, and the expectations attached to student performance.

On the other hand, the treatment that international teachers were accorded in Botswana was significantly different from the manner in which they were regarded in the U.S. As she juxtaposed her story of transitioning to Botswana against transitioning to the U.S., she narrated the differences in terms of logistical transitions such as living expenses. The government in Botswana subsidized housing for expatriate teachers and also paid for their visits back home after three years. Additionally, they paid for the transport expenses of one's family. However, the recruitment agency in the U.S. only paid for the airfare of the person taking the job but not for family members. Thus, the logistical issues pertaining to housing and relocation were largely the individual's responsibility, hence increasing costs. However, though the living expenses were higher in the U.S. than in Botswana, Charity mediated the discrepancy by focusing on the professional development opportunities available to her in the U.S. She found leverage by seeing herself as a new kind of teacher with access to more professional development opportunities. She therefore narrated herself as a teacher who mediated the two different contexts by focusing on the positives.

Gwenn referenced the experience of teaching in two different schools in the UK as having prepared her to teach in the U.S. in this regard. Her experience helped her in negotiating the situated aspects of identity in terms of student behavior and relationships and her relationships with colleagues. Additionally, her experience as a Fulbright scholar in the midwest was also a tool she utilized for identity negotiation both professionally and personally. She had learned that she needed to be a different kind of teacher in the U.S.

Although Gwenn's transition did not entail changing her teaching style per se, she learned that she needed to negotiate personal and professional relationships differently.

Not all previous experiences were resources that international teachers could positively draw upon to negotiate their identity in the new context. Previous professional experiences did not always translate to positive ways of negotiating a teacher's sense of self while teaching in the U.S. When Rhonda reflected on her previous experience in teaching and measured it against her current experience, she made the decision to leave the profession. She could not be the teacher she had been in New Zealand. Rhonda felt that her teaching style in the U.S. did not reflect who she was as a person. She struggled with having to be more confrontational with her students in the U.S.:

I don't want to change my view of education which is what I was brought up on from two high school teachers and my degrees that I have and the experience that I had teaching in New Zealand, I don't want to lose my vision of it, and if I carried on teaching in this particular environment it would wear down what I believe in and I don't want to be someone who sees education as not the best thing ever, so I can't really carry on with it here.

While teaching in their home countries, Nancy (Argentina) and Mary (Colombia) were accustomed to teaching English and therefore had to adjust to teaching Spanish in the U.S. In a sense, the structure of the Spanish language was almost a taken for granted aspect which they had to address in their U.S. classrooms. Spoken Spanish was different from teaching Spanish grammar. Although they had also learned Spanish grammar in college in addition to other languages, they had not utilized Spanish as an academic language in their teaching. It was a language they used outside of professional settings. This meant that they had to switch viewing themselves as teachers of English to teachers

of Spanish, as they had previously attached their professional identity to being teachers of English. Additionally, different countries spoke slightly different variations of Spanish. They had to negotiate such variations as they utilized the Spanish texts in their classrooms.

In order to reconcile the professional adjustments, Nancy focused on viewing the international teaching experience as one that enriched her cultural competence and also gave her an opportunity to enroll in a master's program in the U.S. Mary, who referred to herself as an active learner, also viewed the experience as a resource she could eventually utilize in her country or in another country in future. She was also glad that she could begin her graduate studies in the U.S. A degree from a U.S university could accord her better teaching opportunities anywhere in the world.

Vera, Naomi, and Perla, who taught ESL students, negotiated their identity significantly through relationships with their students. Their classroom practice was complicated by the fact that some of their students were not fluent in their mother tongue. Lack of native language skills impacts students' ability to learn a second language (Cummins, 1996, 2000). They hence needed to adjust their subject content delivery so that the students would not only develop basic language skills but also acquire subject content related discourse (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). They also viewed their teacher identity as related to the role of advocacy for the ESL students. Vera realized that her identity as a teacher was connected to the larger systems of power as she learned the politics of funding the ESL program. Perla connected her biographical experiences with those of her students in order to motivate them to learn and become bilingual. The ESL

teachers faced the realities of funding being discontinued for ESL programs in several schools in their districts. This reality gave them understanding of the sociopolitical context that they were teaching in that was different from their home countries where ESL teachers were well respected and highly regarded.

Personal, Professional, and Situated Dimensions of Identity

The personal dimensions of identity included life outside school and the international teachers' relationships with family and friends. Although the personal was not directly related to who teachers were as professionals, personal aspects of identity were significant in helping teachers adjust to the new context. The personal lives of teachers impacted their professional lives (Goodson, 1994; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). Rhonda commented that if it was not for the support from her husband and his family, she would probably have been among the teachers who left within the first year. Her professional story was connected to her personal story of support from her husband and his family. Similarly, Charity referenced her husband's and her mother's support, who both helped take care of their child when she was expecting their second born and was still enrolled in a master's program. Family support contributed to her success as a teacher and a graduate student. Her stories of support in the personal dimension were directly linked to her successful adjustment as a teacher and a graduate student.

Naomi appreciated the support she got from her boyfriend, although he lived six hours away from her. The fact that he was an American who understood the Romanian culture and language helped her to adjust to life in the U.S. Perla began to feel as though she could call the U.S. "home" when she got into a steady relationship. Although her

partner was an expatriate from India, their plans to make a home together eased her homesickness. All the participants spoke of the support they experienced from other international teachers.

The professional dimensions of identity included the roles and expectations of who a teacher is, opportunities for professional development and workloads. Frequently the teachers faced different expectations from what they were familiar with. Negotiating their identity was dependent on whether the variations of the professional identity available were in line with the values and beliefs they held about teaching, learning and education. Although the international teachers initially struggled with the workload in terms of the amount of paper work and grading, they were able to adjust accordingly. Vera drew meaning from the fact that the paper work was directly related to the funding of the ESL program.

The situated dimensions of identity were dependent upon the specific school context. Such aspects included student behavior, classroom management and collegial relationships (Day & Kington, 2008). All the international teachers narrated aspects of having to learn different ways of communicating and building relationships with their students and colleagues. However, Rhonda was unable to reconcile aspects of student behavior and classroom management with the manner in which she dealt with students in New Zealand. Charity viewed her school administration as playing a crucial role in her classroom management, while Nancy felt that she did not want to call on their help unless she really needed to. Nancy utilized cultural mediation as a tool for classroom

management and developing relationships. The cross-cultural differences were evidenced in how they handled student-teacher and collegial relationships (Hofstede, 1986).

Significance of this Research

This research is significant because it gives voice to the experiences of international teachers whose perspectives are scarce in the literature. The literature on teacher identity is extensive as it offers varying perspectives ranging from preservice teacher identity, subject matter and teacher identity, and the impact of educational change and reform on teacher identity as indicated in Chapter II. It is important for policy makers, instructional, and teacher leaders working with international teachers to understand how teachers who undertake international assignments think and act both collectively and individually, and how they develop professionally in an international context. As Goodson (1991) points out, an important ingredient missing in teacher development is the teacher's voice. Thus the teachers' narratives were an avenue for them to speak about their struggles and successes.

Another significant aspect of this research is that it offers a platform for the basis of inquiry that connects the personal, professional and situated aspects of teacher identity that are mediated by crossing cultural and geographical borders. Previous research on teacher identity makes these connections within the context of teachers being located in their own countries with few studies on the experiences of international teachers in the U.S. The background of teachers is an important aspect of their work and teacher practice. How they reconcile their previous personal and previous professional experiences with their current experiences impact how they negotiate their identity in

new contexts, subsequently impacting their effectiveness and motivation to stay on the job (Day & Kington, 2008).

This research also sheds light on the interconnectedness of teacher identity and educational culture. Teaching is not simply a matter of curriculum delivery. Teachers carry assumptions, values, beliefs, feelings and perceptions about who they teach, what they teach, how they teach and why they teach (Danielewicz, 2001). When teachers uphold value systems that differ from those of their host country and the specific school they teach in, their success may depend on learning to reconcile the contradictory values and beliefs.

The transitional challenges that the international teachers faced were shared explicitly as vivid realities of their lived experiences. These challenges were varied depending on the circumstances of the individual teacher, although there were some recurring themes. The impact of the transitional challenges on the teachers' identities evidenced that transitioning to a new work context could be made less challenging by sharing this responsibility between the individual and the organization—in this case the recruiting agencies and the schools. This would enable teachers to deal with the conflict between the policy images of who they are as professionals and their practices.

Implications for School Leaders, Recruitment Agencies, and International Teachers

The data revealed that the successful transition of international teachers in adjusting from teaching from one context to another has some co-relation to their ability to draw and access from multiple transitional resources. These resources include recruiting agencies, school and teacher leaders, personal and professional relationships,

meaning that international teachers drew from their previous experiences and their sense of agency. I look at each of these groups and explore how they could play a role in making the transition of international teachers into teaching in the U.S. less challenging. Additionally, I explore what international teachers as well as those intending to engage in international experiences in their professional career can learn from these experiences.

Recruiting Agencies

In his report on foreign teacher recruitment in the U.S., Barber (2003) noted some troubling dynamics concerning the employment relationship between international teachers and the school districts. For most international teachers, the employer (the school district) is the sponsor for the H-1B or the J-I visas. Thus, they can directly or indirectly cause a teacher's visa to be revoked. Due to this level of job uncertainty, "there is at least the potential for a degree of intimidation from which permanent employees are shielded" (Barber, 2003, p. 2). Some of the teachers narrated this scenario as they shared stories of how some of their colleagues were asked to leave their jobs and subsequently leave the country before the 3-year contract was over. The reasons they provided were largely due to job cuts and adjustment challenges, although some had left on their own accord. Another concern that Barber noted in his report was the potential for international teachers to be paid at a lower scale than U.S. teachers. This was evident in Gwenn's case as the district did not recognize her graduate credentials because her graduate degree was not from a U.S. university. There is also evidence that some school districts pay international teachers as beginning teachers regardless of their previous teaching experience in their countries (Barber, 2003). Recruiting agencies as the mediating

organization need to address such matters of fairness. Advocacy is needed for equitable hiring practices for international teachers.

Although recruiting agencies try to minimize the logistical challenges of settling into a different country, the orientation process could be structured to be ongoing rather than 3 to 5 day training upon the international teachers' arrival. The stories of the international teachers evidenced their need for further professional development that went beyond the orientation week. Recruiting agencies also need to offer a more rigorous orientation pertaining to the U.S. school structure and curriculum. Many teachers mentioned how they wished they had been prepared beforehand about school structures such as teaching 90-minute blocks, the amount of grading and the testing system. Others such as Vera spoke of how she wished she knew that her salary would be attached to the performance of the students. Other practical orientation complexities included the expectation of having a person take a driving test the day after arriving in the U.S. even when one has not had adequate previous driving experience in his or her home country. Even with prior driving experience, taking a driving test on a different road system takes some adjusting.

Educational Leadership in a Globalized World

School and teacher leaders play a critical role towards meeting the goal of preparing students for global citizenship. In working towards this goal, it is important for school leaders and teacher leaders to be intentional about building relationships with international teachers. Often, international teachers felt left out of the communication avenues in the schools. Building relationships with international teachers facilitates their

adjustment to the school culture and eases their uncertainty as they seek to fit into the school community. Additionally, school leaders need to be aware that frequently, international teachers may not be familiar with U.S. school practices and culture such as teacher evaluation systems, grading systems, managing student behavior and the protocol involved in handling disciplinary issues. In this regard, international teachers may require explicit instruction about certain school procedures. Furthermore, an intercultural climate in the school can be enhanced by leaders being more attuned to the values and beliefs that international teachers have about teaching and learning.

A school culture and climate that takes into consideration the diversity of cultures represented not only by the students but also by the teachers is conducive for effective teaching. Incorporating cultural variations in leadership practices can help advance a favorable teaching and learning environment for students, U.S. and international teachers (Walker, 2007). Authentic leadership requires engaging in a continuous learning process that incorporates the complex understanding of how globally motivated educational reforms interact with “traditional” values of schools. This learning on the leaders’ part has to be intentional. Additionally, leaders need to develop a more deliberately relational approach to leading (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Inclusive administrative and leadership practices rooted in equity and social justice should focus both on the diversity of the student body and the diversity of teachers. The literature on leadership of social justice (Riehl, 2000) and multicultural education (Gollinick & Chinn, 2009) should be extended to valuing diversity with a global focus. Murakami-Ramalho (2010) affirms this stance by making the claim that

Addressing racism and discrimination is the first step but not enough to prepare students for the complexities of international relations. International education expands on multicultural education, as it prepares students for immersion in contemporary, sociopolitical, cultural, and economic contexts and conversations. (pp. 197-198)

It is therefore important to seek opportunities to prepare students for global realities by advancing global learning contexts such as those offered by international teachers.

After listening to and analyzing the stories of the eight international teachers, there emerged a clear connection between teaching, learning and building community. Enhancing a professional learning community through three perspectives—organizational, cultural, and leadership (Mullen 2009; Mullen & Schunk, 2010) can serve to create a favorable learning environment for students, U.S. and international teachers and school leaders. Developing global competency skills among students is an initiative that can be enhanced from an organizational level. Schools that exhibit organizational goals, structures and processes (Johnson, 2009) that facilitate global competency for all students go hand in hand with integrating norms that facilitate the success of international teachers. These include organizational structures that support the learning of international teachers and U.S teachers in a reciprocal sense. Simply having international teachers in U.S. school classrooms is not an adequate endeavor to develop global competency—mutual learning of all in the school community needs to take place.

Schools are organizations that share a common set of features such as structures, policies, values and norms (Deal & Peterson, 2009) that international teachers may not be aware of. Additionally, learning processes within an organization have a socio-cultural

dynamic. Furthermore, learning is an “integral and inseparable aspect of social practice, which involves the construction of identity” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Thus, it is important for schools as organizations to integrate learning as a vital process of identity negotiation among international teachers. Participation within the school involves not just engaging in the daily duties of school but building and maintaining connections which helps teachers to feel a sense of belonging within the school community (Wenger, 1998). Thus, building relationships within the school community is crucial. “Learning is not simply about developing one’s knowledge and practice, it also involves a process of understanding who we are and in which communities of practice we belong and are accepted” (Handley et al., 2006, p. 644). Communities of practice then become professional learning communities where all learn. Additionally, such learning communities need to be culturally responsive learning communities (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Cooper, Allen, & Bettez, 2009) that collaborate to advance the learning process of students such as those found in the schools where the eight international teachers teach.

A missing piece in the transitional narratives of international teachers was a clear mentoring strategy for the international teachers. Although some of them were able to have a collaborative relationship with their local advisor as a mentor such as Charity, their stories were varied in terms of their access to a mentor within the school. On mentoring international teachers in Australia, Peeler and Jane (2005) argue that frequent interactions within a mentoring relationship help to bridge the gap between the “newcomers’ former ways of knowing and current practice” (p. 334). The stories of the

international teachers evidence communication barriers within the school communities that could be eased by such mentoring relationships.

The culture of schooling consists of explicit and implicit goals of education. One such explicit goal that this research analyzes is the ability to develop a globally competent citizenry in public schools through the avenue of recruiting international teachers. However, the implicit goals of schooling need to be aligned with such an explicit goal. It is not enough to have an international teacher in a classroom. Other integrated practices should be considered. Many education reform researchers including Sarason (1981, 1996) and Fullan (2001) have voiced the significant contribution and role that school culture plays to the success of implementation process. If schools are supposed to be learning communities that integrate global perspectives into the curriculum, then there is need for policy makers and school leaders to develop school cultures that are “global learning communities.” As Eisner (2002) points out, cultural artifacts such as text materials, the structure of the classroom, the kind of illustrations that text books contain, and the kind of language that is used socialize students to a set of expectations. The school environment also plays a role in how students perceive the expectations that are explicitly spoken to them. For instance, Rhonda shared about her experience that “the school is not an inviting place to learn.” How do teachers convey the value of learning when the environment is not conducive for learning? If policy makers are serious about building global communities in public schools, more explicit avenues should be considered.

International teachers offered some perspectives on school structures that could be considered by policy makers. Eisner (2002) asserts that “the culture one is immersed in is often the most difficult to see” (p. 95). International teachers raised issues such as the impact of having 90 minute blocks, and having the same students every day of the week and the consequences of having different grades learning together. They also reflected on the impact of spreading one subject during the whole academic year instead of one semester. The pros and cons of such school structures need to be considered as they impact the learning process. Additionally, how teachers experience their sense of self within the school structure matters. The entire environment needs to be taken into account in order to provide students with an education that incorporates global perspectives. The implementation of incorporating global perspectives in education has treated these issues in isolated blocks such as teacher education, educational administration, curriculum, and hiring international teachers—these aspects of internationalizing education in the U.S. should be seen as linked processes and not isolated aspects of educational reform.

While they can be instrumental in meeting this goal, international teachers cannot carry the entire burden of equipping students to be globally competent citizens. Organizational change is needed to support the success of international teachers. School, district and teacher leaders could play a key role in this change process. Organizational change and professional socialization of international teachers need to go hand in hand. Nicholson (1984) posits that “the process of adjustment poses for the person the fundamental alternatives of adapting to meet environmental requirements or manipulating

the environment to meet personal requirements” (p. 174). Teachers are not always in a position to manipulate the environment. It is a bit of both. Organizational learning is essential. Students cannot be educated to be globally competent learners without organizational structures that support such learning processes.

International Teachers

A successful international teaching experience can be enhanced through several individual and collective practices. Becoming self reflective during an international assignment helps one understand the meanings of uncertain situations as they accustom to a new context. Identities are continuously defined and redefined then legitimized through personal and professional relationships. Just because a teacher’s life was considerably different from what she/he experiences in the U.S. does not necessarily mean that he/she will be unsuccessful in his/her teaching career. It is the meaning the teacher attaches to this difference and how an individual is able to adapt to a new living and working context that determines their success or failure.

The value that teachers attach to their work is impacted by their relationships with students, their colleagues and school leaders. Additionally, the remuneration that teachers receive for their work also impacts their sense of self as teachers to some extent.

Depending on how much teachers earn in their countries, they will earn higher or lower wages in the U.S. Although Perla, Gwenn, and Rhonda took a pay cut when they came to the U.S., each of them viewed the monetary aspect differently. Perla enjoyed the international teaching experience although she earned less money than her previous position in Brazil. She viewed the experience as offering her a better quality of life as she

worked fewer hours. Similarly, Gwenn experienced a pay cut due to the lower paying scales of U.S. teachers. Additionally her graduate credentials were not recognized in the U.S. However, she enjoyed living in the U.S. and therefore did not represent the pay cut as a major transitional issue. Rhonda however could not reconcile herself to the salary she earned as a teacher and the teaching conditions. She therefore chose to leave the profession at the end of her contract.

Teachers should consider the lifestyle they are going to be able to afford in relation to the remuneration they will earn as teachers. Charity's lifestyle was better in Botswana, but she envisioned the U.S. teaching experience as an avenue for professional development. The terms of contract in Botswana were much better than her contract package in the U.S. in terms of what she earned, the benefits she had and the cost of living.

Although international teachers may experience language and/or communication barriers, these are not insurmountable. As the data indicated, teachers found ways of coping with language and communication barriers. Mary enrolled in English courses in order to improve her conversational English skills. She also went on a trip to the UK, which boosted her confidence in the learning that had taken place in terms of her spoken language expertise.

International teachers bring a wealth of resource to the host country. It is important for international teachers to view their work as a valuable instrument of intercultural learning processes in U.S. schools and the society as a whole as it provides them a sense of satisfaction, which impacts their professional identity. For instance,

through Charity's advocacy, one of her students was able to participate in international experiences with other students around the globe. This opportunity gave her a different perspective and inspired other students in her school and district. Likewise, Mary encouraged her students to understand not only the language but the culture of the people that speak that language. She facilitated a trip to Spain for her class. Gwenn introduced the idea of setting personal goals for her students in order to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Limitations and Further Research

While this research study offers insights for scholars and practitioners, it also has certain limitations. As a narrative study, the identity negotiation and construction of international teachers is located in the data provided through the teachers' stories, not in the actual classroom teaching experiences of these teachers. Although the study was not about negotiating international teachers identity merely within the classroom and the school, classroom observations followed by interviews could offer additional insights on the relationship between classroom practice and the teacher transitional narrative.

Further, incorporating a focus group in the data collection process whereby the international teachers share their stories in a common space could offer additional information on the impact of transitional resources such as relationships with other international teachers. Creating a dialogical space where international teachers share their stories not only with a researcher but also with one another could minimize a researcher's influence. All international teachers claimed that their fellow colleagues were useful transitional resources. Additionally, focus groups can be used to access underlying

complex information by means of a collective conversation that helps participants generate ideas that may not have been shared during one-on-one interviews (Glesne, 2006; Shank, 2006).

A longitudinal study that tracks international teachers' stories from the beginning of their 3-year contract to the end could offer additional data that presents in depth knowledge about how international teachers negotiate their identities over time. Data can be tracked through journal entries and interviews throughout the 3 years.

This study was based in one state in the southeast within three school districts with interviews from eight international teachers. The study could be extended to more states and other countries in order to offer diverse points of view. The American culture is not static and homogenous. International teachers recruited into schools in the north or midwest could offer different perspectives on how they navigate school culture and the culture of the surrounding community. Additionally, a greater pull of international teachers from different countries could offer possibilities of differing or similar realities of international teaching experiences. The data sample was impacted by the economic downturn during the 2009-2010 academic year, which led to many international teachers having to leave before their contracts were over. It was also not possible to access male teachers in the surrounding school districts that I carried out the research making it seem as though this study was gender based, although it was not my intent as a researcher.

In order to have a better grasp of school cultures and how they impact the identities of international teachers, school and teacher leaders who host international

teachers should be interviewed. Their perspectives can offer insights on the instructional needs of international teachers from a leadership standpoint.

Summary

As a researcher, though I had my own beliefs about the challenges that international teachers face, I did not realize the magnitude of the transitional adjustments. It is a huge undertaking to find a coherent sense of self when almost every aspect of what one is used to is shifting. I therefore honor the work of the international teachers and hope that as an educational leader, I can play a role in easing their transitions in the future by taking the initiative to build support networks within the school districts that can provide opportunities for dialogue and relationship building. I hope that this work can be informative in helping school leaders and recruiting agencies understand that having international teachers in the schools also means accepting a measure of responsibility in providing accessibility to transitional resources.

This research has revealed some significant ideas about how teachers, transition from teaching in their home countries to teaching in the U.S. Negotiating an identity as a teacher in a different country is layered with complexities. However, the experience can be both beneficial for the host country and for the individual teachers if better dialogue occurs between school leaders, U.S. teachers and the international teachers. If the presence of international teachers in U.S. public schools is an endeavor that school districts hope to maintain, there is a need for more spaces of feedback between international teachers and educational leaders. Transition is an uncertain time when professionals may not be able to realize their full potential even in their area of expertise.

Hence, international teachers face the paradox of beginning to get accustomed teaching in the U.S. and finding a sense of belonging in the school community and then having to leave and go back to their home countries after 3 to 5 years. However, schools can utilize their skills and expertise during the duration of time they are teaching in the U.S by viewing the undertaking as a reciprocal relationship that can be mutually beneficial.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
2718 Beverly Cooper Moore and Irene Mitchell Moore
Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.
PO Box 26170
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170
336.256.1482
Web site: www.uncg.edu/orc
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Carol Mullen
Ed Ldrship and Cultural Found
239B Curry Building

From: UNCG IRB

Authorized signature on behalf of IRB

Approval Date: 6/07/2010

Expiration Date of Approval: 6/06/2011

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)

Submission Type: Initial

Expedited Category:

Study #: 10-0194

Study Title: A Narrative Study of International Teachers' Transitional Identities in US High Schools

This submission has been approved by the IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:

The purpose of this study is to describe, analyze and document the transitional identities of international teachers.

Investigator's Responsibilities

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other recruitment materials. You must copy the stamped consent forms for use with subjects unless you have approval to do otherwise.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification application available at <http://www.uncg.edu/orc/irb.htm>). Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB using the "Unanticipated Problem/Event" form at the same website.

CC: Christine Nganga, Chris Farrior, (ORED), Non-IRB Review Contact, (ORC), Non-IRB Review Contact

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

International Teachers' Transitional Identities 1

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

INTERNATIONAL TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Research Project Title: A narrative study on international teachers' transitional identities in U.S. high schools.

Project Director: Dr. Carol A. Mullen

Student Researcher: Ms. Christine W. Nganga

Participant's Name: -----

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study is to describe, analyze and document the transitional identities of international teachers. International teachers are foreign born and trained professionals who come to the United States on a temporary work visa. The narrative study will explore their challenges and successes in the socialization process of transitioning from teaching in their home countries to teaching in American high schools.

Why are you asking me?

A UNCG faculty or student informed you concerning your potential participation about a study on international teachers. You have been picked for this study because you come from a different country other than the United States. The participants in this study are teachers from different countries who have been teaching in U.S. high schools for 1 to 5 years. You also had your teacher education training from another country other than the United States.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to do this study?

Participants in this study will be interviewed two times. Each interview will last 60-90 minutes. This will be your actual time commitment. The interviews will take place at the UNCG library in one of the group study halls or in another setting convenient to the participant. The interviews will take place outside of school instructional time and not in the schools where they teach.

Is there any audio/video recording?

The participants in this study will have their voices recorded during the interviews. Because your voices will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the digital recorder, your confidentiality for things you say on the digital recorder cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will try to limit access of the digital recorder to the researchers. The digital recorder will be kept in locked file cabinet at the researcher's home on 5725 Phelps Circle, Winston Salem, NC. 27105.

What are the dangers to me?

There are minimal risks to participating in this study such as the participants may feel uncomfortable sharing challenging experiences during their transition from their home countries to the US. If participants express discomfort at any time in the research process, the researcher will not press for any information that the participant is not willing to disclose. Additionally, the researcher will maintain confidentiality at all times during the research process.

If the participant has any concerns about their rights, how they are being treated or if they have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482. Questions, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Dr. Carol

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form

Valid 6/7/10 to 6/6/11

Mullen who may be contacted at 336-334-9895 or camullen@uncg.edu.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in the study?

There are no direct benefits.

Are there any benefits to society as a result me taking part taking part in this research?

The findings of this research study have the potential to inform future professional development and mentoring programs for international teachers, so that they can be more effective in their teaching.

Will I get paid for being in this study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information confidential?

There will be no another individuals within hearing distance when the interviews are taking place. The interviews on the digital recorder will be erased as soon as data is transcribed. The transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet at the student the researcher's home on 5725 Phelps Circle, Winston Salem, NC. 27105. Pseudonyms will be used for all the participants in any transcriptions and publications. There will be no reference to the school district and schools that the participants teach. Following the publication of the dissertation, any identifiable data will be destroyed. Transcripts and consent forms will be kept for 3 years after the conclusion of the project. After 3 years, consent forms, transcripts, and field notes will be shredded. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. If you withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. You may request that any of the data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

How about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary consent by participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you have read it, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing to consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form

Valid 6/7/10 to 6/6/11

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Code: (to be completed by researcher to ensure anonymity) _____

Age: 20-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 50-60, 60-70.

Gender: Male, Female

What country were you born in? _____

When did you come to the U.S.? _____

How many years have you been teaching in the U.S.? _____

What subject areas do you teach? _____

For how many years did you teach in your country before coming to the U.S.? _____

Have you taught in another country other than your home country and the U.S.? If so
which country?

What are your educational credentials? _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Question: How do international teachers negotiate their identities as they transition from teaching in their countries of origin to teaching in US high schools?

- a) What experiences impact personal, professional and situated dimensions of international teachers' identities within the context of teaching in the US?

1. Personal aspects of identity

- a) Tell me the story of your life before you came to the United States.

- Tell me about your background?

Probes: growing up, your family, your schooling experiences, educational biography.

- b) How would you describe yourself as a person?

Probes: your values, beliefs

- c) Outside of your teaching, how would you describe your life in your home country?

Identity Transitions:

- d) Share some personal challenging experiences in your transition.

- e) What about less challenging experiences?

- f) What support systems were available as you came to teach in the U.S.?

Family, friends etc?

- g) Any other experiences that you would like to share?

2. Professional aspects of identity.

- a) Tell me about your life as a teacher.

- How did you become interested in teaching? What experiences led you to wanting to become a teacher?
- What is the process of becoming a teacher in your country?

Probes: Teacher Education programs, professional development

- What was your experience like in teaching in your country before coming to the US?
- Tell me about your values and beliefs as a teacher?

Identity Transitions:

- b) How did you become interested in teaching in the U.S.?

- Describe the process.

- c) Looking back to your initial experiences as a freshly arrived international teacher, what stood out for you?
 - d) Describe some of the best experiences in your teaching?
 - e) Tell me about some of the challenging experiences in your teaching while making this transition? How did you overcome these challenges?
Probes: Teaching subject content, understanding local and national school policies, classroom management etc.
 - f) What were the least professional challenging aspects of this transition?
 - g) Have there been any changes in your values and beliefs about teaching? If so, what experiences in teaching in the U.S. have caused this?
 - h) How is your teaching experience similar or different from teaching in your home country?
 - i) How would you assess your success in teaching in the U.S.?
 - j) How do you generally feel about teaching in the United States?
Probes: how have you grown as an educator?
 - k) Any other experiences of your professional life that you would like to share?
3. Situated aspects of identity
- a) Tell me about the previous schools you taught in your home country in terms of structure, culture, etc.
 - b) How would you describe your relationships with students, administrators and colleagues back in your country?
Identity transitions:
 - c) Have there been any changes in the way you address relationships with students, colleagues, administrators etc?
 - Students: How would you describe relationships with your students in U.S. schools? How do you feel the students respond to your teaching?
 - What about your relationships with colleagues, administrators, parents?
 - d) Who has been most helpful in transitioning in the U.S. professionally, why, in what way? Share some stories of support during the transition.
 - e) What about the school structure and climate? How have these impacted your experience as an international teacher?
 - f) Any other aspects of teaching in the U.S. that you would like to share?
4. What are your future career plans?